"CHEAP JOHN'S" AUCTION:

A Narrative in Three Parts.

BY

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(Author of "The Bar Sinister.")

Mahony, Martin Francis

"Et ta vertu fait un vacarme
Qui ne cesse de m' assommer."

MOLIERE.

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"CHEAP JOHN'S" AUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

1852-8 M.E.L.

THERE was great beating of drums, together with blowing of trumpets and horns, shrilly whistles and wheezy clarinets, a rapid assembling of the townsfolk—attracted by excitement, as well as by the inspiring outburst of music—when a huge lumbering Caravan drove up the main street of the town, and halted in a central position of the densest thoroughfare.

It was a massive waggon, drawn slowly forward by a single toiling donkey. The abject quadruped was obviously overburdened by the ponderous vehicle. Up-hill work indeed it seemed, for his appearance was not sleek or youthful — quite otherwise. Vigour had evidently departed out of him long ago. His hide was coarse, unkempt. Starvation stared open-eyed through those rugged ribs. His straggling legs and doubtful knees were seamed with many a scar; the outline of his form was dislocated, irregular, and a wasting, doleful expression lingered beneath those gummy, downcast eyelids. In truth, a pitiful specimen of an

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humble kind, a soul-rending spectacle to look at; for he was not only unequal to his laborious task, but plainly sick at heart of it also.

No wonder! he had been tackled to the shafts of this machine now many a year, and the load was not getting lighter with time, nor the work growing easier. Age had so added to the unwieldiness of the vehicle, that it was sensibly becoming more difficult to draw every day. The wheels thereof, the pulleys, and shafts, and axles were always slipping out of order or falling to pieces; and when repairs were undertaken, dishonest tradesmen were employed, so that the work was often botched, or executed with rotten materials. By consequence, the motion of the Caravan became increasingly spasmodic and irregular; until, from the incessant galling of the shaft upon his withers, and the excessive friction of it, the poor animal was fairly worn out, and very weary of his life. He would have kicked the vehicle to pieces long ago, only the spirit had departed out of his heels, and infirmities had beaten him down, and age had broken his pride.

Yet in youth this had been a lively and distinguished donkey, and had started in many a famous race, before the monotony of incessant toil had deprived him of confidence and nerve, until, in the recklessness of despair, he had become so accustomed to feel like a mere jade, and

to lead the life of a drudge, that he had not the heart to dare, nor the energy to endeavour.

The machine itself seemed also to have tasted the vicissitudes of fortune. Evidently it had in its time passed through the hands of various adventurous shopmen and showmen, in different or in rival lines of business. Each successive tenant had partially decorated and upholstered it, according to the freaks of his own invention, or the interests of his trade or enterprise; so that it was disfigured with a patchwork of miscellaneous colours, and with the unsightly remainder of many a crazy design. The original painting of the structure was quite lost. It was pasted over with so many posters, and advertising sheets of obsolete dates, belonging to the different mountebanks, pedlars, and huxters, who had held short leases, or been tenants from year to year of the property.

The glue and pasteboard of these posters served to hold the structure of the worn-out wood-work together, and by running the eye over these old bills, you could gather an outline of the past history of the Caravan.

Pitiful reading this was for the eye of an Englishman to scan; bitter the moral which it preached. For the name of that great lumbering imposition was the British Constitution, and the abject jade tugging hopelessly between its shafts —that thoroughly patient Ass—was called The British Tax-payer.

PART I.

THE AUCTION.

THE present tenant of the old travelling waggon was of that profession which, in provincial towns, villages, and fairs, is called "Cheap-John." That is a mixture of huxter, pedlar, and travelling quack, who sells worthless and dishonest wares to gaping rustics and mechanics. If the goods of this Cheap-John were not of sterling value, they were cheap to look at; and persons of narrow income could, by purchasing at his stall, make-believe to furnish their homes in respectability and comfort. It was but make-believe, however. The articles were mere glue and veneer, pinchbeck frippery stuff, composed of worthless shoddy, of every variety of cast-off material. Penny penknives, and copper gold rings, and razors polished to look like steel, and wooden nutmegs, and tin hand-saws—silver articles that were burnished lead, and frying-pans and sauce-pans made of papier-maché.

Notwithstanding the trash in which he dealt, this "Cheap-John"—whose real name was William—William Goodman—supported a family out of his business, not only procured a living for himself and partners, and all their poor relations and hangers-on, but also stood well with the com-

pany from which he rented the concern, and was considered a good, even an improving, tenant. This was the result of his constant attention to business, the fruit of his industry and prudence. He was up early and late at the counter; and, if to the world he always kept an open and honest countenance, he was mindful also to provide himself with a working staff of ripe and practised associates, who never missed an opportunity of profit, and whose eyes were unrelaxingly fixed on the main chance.

But it does not follow that a man is necessarily "good," because he happens to be a good man of business. Nor even though he should have received the name of "Goodman" at the baptismal font—names sometimes fail in conferring moral qualifications. Yet there was no name which this "Cheap-John" William loved better than his own, no reputation which he desired more to acquire than a character for "goodness." He preferred his moral character even to his business character—a remarkable phenomenon in one of his vocation. Therefore, in order to preserve his renown untarnished, he avoided as much as possible mixing up with the discreditable practices which were inseparable from his dishonest profession. He left these things mainly to the petty clerks, to the underlings of the staff; and made a special order, that all the necessary trading lies

were to be told without consulting him, without his knowledge, as it were. That the invoices from the knavish manufacturers of wooden nutmegs and brass gold rings were to be hidden away from under his eye altogether, so that he should be able to pledge his word that the goods on sale were of genuine material and honest value, and there might be no hesitation of voice, or quavering in his delivery, when auctioning off the trumpery collection. No man should be able to substantiate charges of duplicity or deceit against him, William Goodman, or cast a stain upon his superfine good name.

Moreover, in order to stand better with the world, he was for ever talking in the loftiest strain about "principles and honour," "the higher aspirations of the species," "the destiny of human nature," "the duties and the charities of life," and similar pulpit phrases, so that it was often as good as a sermon to hear him. Further, he had in hire a gang of touts, and lemon-faced, pious-looking, seedy fellows, in sleek hair, and drab gaiters, and dingy white neckcloths, whose business was to circulate amidst the public, explaining to the customers, in confidential whispers, "What a kind, good man William was, how honest—how religious—how much better than his good name, or even than his goody looks he was." How he never

went to the public after dark, or smoked tobacco, or had other nasty habits, but always sat at home in his slippers in the evening, reading his Bible, or posting up his books.

This system of puffery not only contributed to his spiritual and moral distinction, but was likewise of use in a business point of view—it helped to work off the pewter coffee-pots, the sham gridirons, and other doubtful wares. Frequently the dupes who found on trial that the cheap spectacles were only window glass, that the false lucifers would not light, nor the tin hand-saws cut any substance stiffer than porridge, that the over-burnished frying-pans would invariably dissolve on merely being shown the kitchen-fire—even these immediate victims never thought of accusing honest William of being an accessory to the cheat, but would lay all the blame on the vile manufacturers, who did not scruple to impose on the inadvertence of a high-minded shopman with their dishonest utensils.

The supreme moral position which William enjoyed was in some measure due also to his physical construction. He was of that build which has always been associated with a certain school of spiritualism. In shape, he was lankey; of complexion, sallow; his head angular and bony; his legs of the very leggy type, long and irregular. At a glance you should recognize that

he had, indeed, less of the flesh about him than most other men; his waistcoats shrunk inwards, searching in vain to find something to button on, for apparently he was as bowelless even as that transparent phantom, old Marley's ghost.

Like master like man, all his clerks and underlings were lean. The first condition apparently exacted in an assistant was that he should be long and fine-drawn, that in person he should be modelled like the head of the firm. This gave a severe anti-carnal aspect to the whole proprietary, which tempted serious people to frequent the counter, and led to business.

His garments were of formal cut, and in hue inclined to that sacred drab, which fittingly harmonized with his dismal countenance, also with the settled gloom of his dreary disposition. But, on occasions he could find spurts of temper; he could, when goaded, become fierce, declamatory, and overbearing. There was a lurking devil in him, which sometimes leaped out through all restraints, and made quick havoc of adversaries, whom it would have been, perhaps, better policy to spare.

This turbulent sprite often did more mischief in a few reckless moments than the angel Hypocrisy could, with all her industry and patience, manage afterwards to repair. This unquenchable spirit, still tenanting the gaunt and

sombre tabernacle of his person, was a lingering inheritance of youth, for in early days he had been full of vanity and of life like other Philistines. Handsome, too, it was said; perhaps, also, honest, for time alters the character as well as the features of men.

However, we shall presently have an opportunity of studying his portrait in detail.

When the Caravan had secured a central position in the street, and the donkey, released from the shafts, had been turned adrift to ruminate over a collection of stale fodder, then the drumsticks began to thwack with renewed vigor, the horns, whistles, and clarinets to speak up, and the eager crowd to gather about the platform where William Goodman presently mounted, and commenced business—exhibiting, and puffing, and duly knocking down his wares as purchasers came forward. William had an immense variety of stock; all sorts of incongruous and dissimilar articles were there huddled pell-mell like in the wallet of Antolycus, that immortal pedlar and itinerant scamp, whom Shakespeare has handed down to us.

"He had ribands of all the colours in the rainbow; points more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle—inkles, cadisses, cambrics, lawns." And those who did not come to buy remained all the same to listen, pressed

into the crowd in order to derive edification from the exhortation or sermon, which William was often in the habit of delivering in the intervals of business. For again, like Antolycus, "he had a rare gift of persuasion; no bagpipe could move the people faster; he uttered his words as if he had eaten ballads, and all men's ears grew to his tunes."

It was a motley assemblage which now gathered at foot of the pedlar's waggon—as incongruous a collection as the miscellany of goods which the showman had himself to offer. Foreigners were there—of distinction, and foreigners of disrepute—and grumblers of every degree, both native and foreign. Malcontents, too, in numbers—persons who had previously purchased goods at the stall, and who now came with sullen faces to reproach this irreproachable auctioneer, for having cheated them of their money.

This made it an exceptionally trying occasion, and William, who appreciated the temper of the people, and also the danger of the situation, felt ill at ease. His ordinary assurance evaporated; even his conscience gave twinges; he grew nervous, hesitating in his movements, the long drab legs began to have a yielding sensation at the knees. Though habitually arrogant to inferiors and dependants, William was by no means gifted with enduring physical courage. He could

be audacious, resolute, uncompromising upon some affair of trifling moment; but he often failed simply for want of sufficient audacity at the crisis of a great occasion. That fatal inconsistency was either in his nature, or else it arose from the nature of his occupation; the shifty and uncertain requirements of the latter kept his mind in a chronic state of nervousness and instability; he was ever haunted by evil presentiments, by fear that an angry crowd might some day rush in—disperse his partners and his company, scatter the contents of the waggon, and at a stroke demolish his business and his reputation.

Nevertheless, he proceeded with apparent steadiness this forenoon, although as it advanced matters did not improve, few real sales were effected, and sometimes jeering, uncomplimentary expressions of a personal nature would burst from the audience like lightning shafts from the skirts of a storm-cloud. It disconcerted him considerably; his eager eye wandered furtively in search of a policeman, with a secret hope that some member of the force would be found in readiness in case of emergency. But what gave him deep annoyance, and caused most interruption also, was the perverse conduct of a Jew of foreign extraction, who was called *Ben—Ben Trovato*—as if his very existence was merely a party devise or invention. This personage had climbed to the crosstree of a

lamp-post, right in face of William; so that the Jew's curly head was raised to the level of his own, and could be equally well seen by all present. When this underbred Israelite chose to indulge his impish propensities, either by making sucking noises with his tongue while William was speaking, or by vulgar school-boy gestures with his hands, or by calling out in shrilly tones, emitting harsh catcalls, as is the habit of theatrical Olympians, then the people underneath and around would often spitefully applaud the Jew.

Trifling as it seemed, this annoyance was hard to bear, because William knew this Jew to be a dishonest person, that he was merely malicious, instigated by mean motives of interest, and that he was jealous of him, William, as much for his superior goodness as for the good business which he had succeeded in establishing.

This very Jew had, indeed, at one time rented the identical Caravan and tried, a short time, at being a "Cheap-John," too; but he had no high moral exterior to carry him through. He could not get up the orthodox nasal tones, or induce serious persons to take to him, so the speculation broke down, and ended in bankruptcy. It was, on this account, bad taste of him, to play at dog in the manger, and try to spoil for another what he could not enjoy for himself—so William thought, at least.

Finding the audience not disposed to be complimentary, and that neither his popularity nor his sales were up to the ordinary average, William began to search for something with which to make a lead, and win the crowd back into better temper. He was lucky in finding exactly what was wanted, and triumphantly produced the model of a young and beautiful princess, dressed in richest satins, lacquered all over with diamonds, laces, ribbons, pompons, and looking so fresh and happy, that the audience should, per force, soften at the sight, and as he held the pretty thing on high in one hand, with the other he cleverly presented, at the same moment, a dashing youth in kilt and philibeg, with his hair thrown back, and a bold and defiant air, as is the fashion with chieftains of high degree.

Probably, because it has also become the fashion with youth of birth, this gentleman had one hand on his heart, and the other in his pocket, which attitude gave him rather an awkward and ungenerous air, some persons in the crowd laughed broadly at the ridiculous posture of a man in a kilt with a hand in his pocket.

But a strong voice exclaimed—

"Seldom those of his nation have pockets of their own at all, but are constantly thrusting their hungry paws into other men's."

William Goodman, not heeding, declared that

the pair seemed made for each other; that he would not consent to divide them; that they should go off in a pair or not at all.

Whereupon the same rough voice cried out—

"Have a care! if the Scot gets a hold of the princess, perhaps he will sell her, as his countrymen once did their king to the "Commonwealth" for thirty pieces of silver."

"Aye! the Scotch are far o'er canny," exclaimed many tongues together.

This touched William on a sensitive point.

"I am Scotch myself, and no man can say that I am o'er canny," he answered sharply. "I think my recent speeches and my recent acts prove that; yet I am of Scotch descent by both parents; every drop of blood in my veins is Scotch, and I glory in possessing all the distinctive characteristics of my race."

"Like enough. But have you 'an itching palm?'" inquired a gentleman in a broad-brimmed hat, thrusting forward towards the platform with self-asserting coolness.

"Oh! Mr. Doodle; that is scarcely polite. It is not good manners to say so—at least, in public," exclaimed several people together, addressing the speaker, but making way for him respectfully.

"I did'nt mean it literal, you illiterate cusses," exclaimed the new-comer, whose appearance and

manner at once declared his nationality. "I meant nothing but Shakespeare. I say, sair," addressing the auctioneer, "have you 'an itching palm?' We know for certain that you do not 'sell and mart your offices for gold to undeservers'—although that is an uncommon strong Scotch peculiarity, tew, according to my reckoning."

"The other day, for instance, when I was on a business stump in Aberdeen," William Goodman continued, not heeding the interruption.

"Cauld kail in Aberdeen, and cold shoulder in Dublin," observed the Jew Trovato, in an under tone.

"When I was on the stump in Aberdeen, I made a speech"——

"'It was none o' the newest, poor John'—that speech—Shakespeare again, ain't it?" said Mr. Yankee Doodle.

"I made a speech that, I flatter myself, had a certain flavour"——

"An ancient and a fish-like smell—more Shakespeare," repeated the Yankee.

"Oh! herrings!" ejaculated the Jew.

"A certain flavour of sincerity and truth, and if I had been o'er canny, as you say those of my nation are, I should not have made that speech. You'll all agree to that, I think," added William, as the Jew Trovato chuckled, and the people laughed;

"but I made that speech, imprudent as it was, because impelled by the promptings of conscience, and by the higher impulses of my nature, to declare the open truth; because impelled to it by principle, and in every matter of business, principle and truth will be found the only forces which motive the action of your humble servant, William Goodman."

"Hear! hear!" applauded Trovato.

Having come to this full stop, William slipped the young prince and princess swiftly under the table out of the way, for he saw there were underbred roughs and low radicals present, to whom the sight of a beautiful princess and noble young gentlemen were positive objects of aversion.

Yet it was necessary to conciliate these inferior persons, whom, in his tradesman's heart, he deeply abominated; so, in order to excite the love which the vulgar experience for military display, and, if possible, to reanimate sentiments of patriotism amongst these proleterian classes, William took out many boxes of soldiers, one after the other; troops of every regiment, degree, and pattern: horse, foot, dragoons, marines, militia, volunteers, all jumbled pell-mell, with swords and bayonets to match, gunpowder, cannon ball, and cartridges, like those which go to the furnishing of real fighting armies.

At this martial exhibition, however, the audience

perversely grew more bitterly critical than before, and the Jew on the lamp-post put many awkward and disrespectful queries to William, concerning the merit of his forces, and their capabilities for executing manœuvres in the field. This annoyed Goodman, though he answered every question in a sweet voice, and to the best of his ability. But the evil-minded Jew, not content, kept repeating aloud, "that what William said was humbug; that these soldiers were only paper, and could never stand in battle array; that the plumes in the cocked hats were bunches of white feathers; the cannon balls, balls of wax; and that the gunpowder would not blaze." These remarks began to bear fruit; for many voices addressed William in harsh tones, enquiring if these were not the very soldiers which had split asunder when exposed to the sun, and melted when put under the weather—trumpery, unsubstantial toys, fit for the amusement of servant-maids and children, but quite useless to hard-working men who expect value for their money.

"How many boxes of these soldiers have you lying by in stock, and how many can you find ready to dispose of at a moment's notice?" asked a voice.

William replied, mentioning a large number.

But the crowd laughed scornfully; and the Jew

added, that even if true, the boxes were tied up so fast in red tape, that their contents could never be got at, or be unpacked in time, if they came to be wanted in a hurry; that the men were in one box, the horses in another, the bridles and saddles and accoutrements all jumbled up in out-of-the-way drawers; so that nothing under a miracle could set things straight.

But William, who was losing temper, cried out, that not only were the troops good soldiers, but that they would be found ready ones, too, in time of need—that they were fac-similes of the troops which had marched under the sun through Indian plains, and camped in Crimean ice, and penetrated the unexplored fastnesses of Abyssinia—men who could stand to their guns as well as ever—and that, in addition, he had a nicely-painted assortment of steam-boat models and of armour-plated ships, to offer along with the troops—all sterling value.

As he let slip the word "ships," there arose such uproar, above which, the Jew might be heard calling out "Megæra! Captain! Megæra!"

With the ready instinct of a tradesman, William recognized his blunder. So he cleverly turned in the nick of time, and instead of the honey-combed and expensive specimens of naval architecture which he was about to draw forth from the basket, he, with a sudden movement, pulled

out a large parti-coloured flag, which was rolled up among the shavings at the bottom of an old band-box filled with lumber at the back of the platform.

"Now," thought he, "if any object will excite their patriotism and stifle discontent, this is the thing." And without a pause—for his temper was getting up—he let slip the bunting with a sort of jerk out of his hand, and its heavy folds one by one unfurled, and rolling down over the table, where the little soldiers, and cannon, and things, were placed, upset them in all directions.

If the military furniture which littered the platform looked mean before, it appeared doubly insignificant now, by contrast with the great pattern of the flag, and William Goodman made matters worse by crying aloud as he moved it to and fro—

"See! There she goes—the ensign of our fatherland—'The flag that braved a thousand years,'" &c., &c. The quotation was not over fresh, but it sounded appropriate, and the people, if disposed, might have caught fire, but they were not in a mood to be inflamed. Again our salesman had miscalculated.

A hush came over the grouped faces as they stood round the platform, looking at that symbol of national pride. It was their own, and they loved it. An incense of old battle-smoke rose up from its folds that maddened them.

Well they knew the history of that standard, the traditions of its renown. Their fathers had told of the glories which it had won, of the laurels gathered abroad, of the bloody encounters through which that brave ensign had passed. How at home liberty was won beneath its folds at Runnymede; and abroad, how Scot and Dane, Fleming and Gaul, and Spaniard, had in succession gone down before it. How, in the old days, wherever a keel could float, British topmasts had borne it, symbol of England's power and pride, and conquered-right to rule the sea.

How it stung the people to see that blood-stained banner prostituted for the mean ends of a pedlar's traffic; basely used to win a cheer for shams, and puff the trumpery wares of Goodman and his company.

William turned pale on perceiving the mute earnestness, the knitted brows, the solemn faces. This was not the sort of patriotic sentiment which he had expected to evoke.

But if he disliked the turn of affairs, the other partners of the concern, standing by, liked it less; and one of the chief of these, a doubtful character, who had been much in Australia, and who, because of certain peculiarities, was nick-named Lucifer, came close to William, and whispered that he had been making mistakes all the morning, but had put the finishing stroke to it now;

adding, that the drums and whistles should at once strike up some lively air to divert people, and prevent them from turning sullen and dangerous.

William had much respect for the opinion of this Lucifer, who was a first-rate man of business, and, in accordance with the suggestion, was about to give the order to the musicians, when music of another kind suddenly startled them all—a great crashing sound came from the corner of a street hard by.

"The German's barrel-organ, as I live," cried out Lucifer; "what luck that he should arrive at such a moment."

True enough. As he spoke, the large figure of the German Diddler turned the corner of the street, twirling the handle of his organ with such vigour that all the people turned to stare, and at the same moment began to bow and scrape before the musician. They had great respect for this German, and opened a ready way for him towards the platform.

He carried a smiling countenance, and looked exceedingly fat and prosperous; evidently the world had been going well with him, for his organ had a knack of striking up briskly at the right time, which brought in abundant earnings. In the hand not engaged with the organ, he held a string attached to the neck of a dancing bear,

that was his slave, and obeyed all his orders. Whenever the string was chucked, the bear stood on its head or hind legs, or else showed its rows of grinning grinders, and roared lustily. None of the crowd, and, least of all, the proprietors of the caravan, admired those antics; yet, to please the German, they laughed, saying there was no harm whatever in this frolicsome bear, and that it was an excellent beast at bottom.

When the pair neared the platform, William and his associates began to uncover like the rest, and gave the German good-morning, inquiring if the bear felt hungry, or would take anything to lunch.

The bear, obviously well inclined, sat up, and sucked his paws.

Whereupon the German laughed out, saying—"From the way the animal is tugging and snuffing there must be something to his taste in the basket, and as the good beast is easily managed by kindness, it is as well to let him have whatever he fancies."

William hesitated, looking doubtfully at his partners, when there was a whisper, "If we must do it, let it be with apparent good grace. Don't seem to be inhospitable; the bird is tough and untoothsome." So Lucifer, thrusting his hand into the lunch-basket, pulled out a well-fed, full-grown turkey, and cast it to the bear.

The brute threw a somersault with glee, and hugging the turkey close in his cruel paws, with a gratified, contented air, looked up into his German master's face. The German laughed—a coarse German horse-laugh it was.

"It is pleasant," he cried, in a rough tone, "to see that we are all friends, and that you, gentlemen, have been so kind to the harmless bear, who has an old fancy for this unseasonable morsel. As one good turn deserves another, and as I never like to be under a compliment, much less remain in debt, here is a trifle which I believe is honestly due to you this some time back," added the German, feeling hard in his pocket for a small coin, and finding it with difficulty; for the Germans are, like the Scotch, a thrifty race, and rarely carry much circulating medium on their persons.

"It was the sight of the old flag which brought the matter to my mind. You may remember last year when I was in a capering mood, and wanted a carpet to dance on; you may remember that I took the liberty of using your glorious ensign for the purpose; I was in wild spirits at the time, and kicked out manfully, so fear that the nails of my dancing pumps may have torn it, for the texture thereof is by no means as tough as in years gone by, when the bunting was fresher. So here goes, for generosity," added the German with a

flourish. "Here is three halfpence to pay for darning the holes; and you may keep the change to pay for those trumpery ships of yours which I upset on the same frolicsome occasion. Perhaps, I had liquor taken then, and did not quite know what I was at. I'm sorry for it now, however," added the German, handing forward a threepenny-bit over the heads of the people, towards the elevation where William stood.

At this William's companions cried out that the German was very generous to offer a whole threepenny to darn the holes in the flag, that the bunting was not so much injured at all, and that the balance of change would amply compensate for the damage to the flag and the ships.

But Ben Trovato bawled out "Shame!" adding, "that the holes in the flag could never be mended, that the German had been only shamming and making fools of them all, and that they were a mean and degenerated race to endure it."

Everybody was overawed by the truculent aspect of the brawny German, and pretended not to hear the observations of Ben Trovato, the Jew. At all events they paid no heed. Presently the foreigner chucked the string of his bear, preparing to move away.

It was amusing to notice how the crowd opened a lane, and wished him all sorts of civil things as he passed through smiling. He seemed, in-

deed, to be in the best spirits and humour; and proved himself not only a German Diddler, but even a German humourist, as the Jew declared; for as he moved on jauntily, turning the handle of his organ, a certain martial air burst out bravely from his instrument.

An air that came like a thunder-clap on the assembly. What do you suppose it was? What was the spirit-stirring strain which the German Diddler selected to play?

"The Marseillaise!"

"Die Wacht am Rhine!"

Neither one nor the other, but—

"*Rule Britannia.*" Yes, "*Rule Britannia.*"

"Rool, Britanny; Rool, Britanny, rool. There's a tooral-rooral flavour about it which pleases me," observed the Yankee aloud, singing the accompaniment at the top of his voice. "'For Breettons niver, niver, ni—ver, shall be'—Brayvo! I like that chune. Well done, Proosian! It comes in regular appropriate at this time o' the day, tew."

A chuckle from the lamp-post.

"Let poor Goodman alone, can't you, Mr. Doodle," here whispered a man in the crowd, interposing. (This was one of the touts in the pay of the caravan.) "If you don't, you'll drive him out of his mind, and he has quite enough to annoy him already if you only knew."

"And he'll have more, I guess, afore I'm done with him," answered the American. "How am I concerned whether he be in his mind or no. His mind is his own affair, not mine or yours."

"But he wont be able to mind his business if you go on."

"Wal, agreed."

"And if he does no business, he can't earn any money."

"A logical coon!"

"And if no money, then it will be impossible for him to settle that little account of yours, which I presume you desire to balance."

"That last observation is to the point, Stranger," answered the American, pursing up his lips.

Here "Little John," the dwarf, who had been on hands and knees creeping under the platform, made a sudden plunge between the long legs of William Goodman, and seizing the flag with a snatch, furled it up out of sight in the twinkling of an eye. It was now dangerous to have it exposed; for at the strains of the German's ironical performance the faces of the people became suddenly overcast.

As the flag was disappearing, the American emitted a straight squirt of tobacco-juice from his

closed teeth, which just struck it in the corner of the Union Jack.

"That institootion wants mangling up afresh. You had better send it to wash, or bundle it into the ole clo' basket, anywhere out of sight, young man," he observed. "'Tis no longer much credit to the fam'ly. And mind you have all the Proosian blew washed out of the pattern, for that 's no longer the pop'lar colour. An', see! have a care the other colours don't run at the same time, as they are washy enough already. Take care they don't run as your infantry did at the Battle of Dorking, as your troop-horses did at the Battle of Berkshire. Have a care!"

The mocking organ continued to grind on in the distance. William, darting a sour look at the Yankee, nodded to the drums and whistles to strike up, to drown the hateful note.

It was plain that luck was adverse; that no matter how he strove, the counter receipts would on that day be under an average. It was hard that a well-principled tradesman, who knew his business, and who minded it, as he did—who was only anxious to be industrious, and to earn a modest competency—should find himself the innocent victim of envious and malicious men, the puppet of an evil fortune.

As he made this reflection sadly, there was a

strange movement in the remote end of a street opposite to that by which the German had departed, and people began to collect hurriedly round some central object of interest there. Presently there came the sound of a woman sobbing, and the plaintive wail of an infant.

PART II.

How the Auction came to be Obstructed.

PART II.

"He roared so loud, and looked so grim,
His very shadow durst not follow him."

"WHAT! that woman; she is coming down upon us again, as I live!" exclaimed Lucifer, feeling about in the straw under the counter for the handle of the bludgeon, which he usually kept concealed there. This Lucifer was recognized as the Bully of the Caravan. He was an adept in the arts of garotting and knuckle-dusting, which he had picked up to perfection in early life in Australia, from the convicts and ticket-of-leave men, who formed the society of the place. He knew that this woman had been wronged by the institution in which he was a partner—that she had a valid claim upon it; he hated her and her child accordingly. He hated her first for her religion, or rather for being religious at all; then for her poverty; but most of all because of the persistence with which she urged her claim for justice, as that interfered with the prosperity and business of the Caravan. It was like the spite of Shylock towards Antonio—a venom of the blood; the Jew's horror of a Christian, intensified by a hatred of the pocket; the envy which a huxter bears towards a rival who lessens the profit of his traffic.

This Lucifer, be it noted, was in some things more honest than his highly respectable master. He had never, for instance, striven to acquire popularity by adopting any of the stock hypocrisies, aggressive religion, no-Popery lecturing, and nasal oratory, like the head of the firm. He was no pharisee. He despised these devices, as he openly did also the sentiments which they were understood to symbolize—so much candour was in his nature. Business and profit only were his gods—he made no secret of it. Beating and hanging were terrors for him. As for the life to come, he slept out the thought of it. "Bell, book, and candle, could not hold him back, when gold and silver beckoned to come on." These were his avowed principles, and he gloried therein, took every opportunity of proclaiming it to the world.

"Oh! that I could meet you when nobody was looking, on a dark night by a lonesome road, you jade!" he muttered under his teeth, feeling beneath the counter for the handle of his bludgeon; but seeing the overcast faces around, he dropt the weapon, and pretended to be only looking for his snuff-box, which had slipped out of his fingers into the straw at the first sight of the woman.

Then, stepping on the ladder which reached up to William's feet, under pretence of presenting a pinch of snuff to the head of the firm, he in a

whisper indicated the presence of the woman and child.

"What! you don't mean that infer—— I would say, that unfortunate person again!" William exclaimed, in an eager undertone, letting fall several boxes of soft sawder, which he was about to distribute gratis. "How did she find us out? Who sent her here? What on earth am I to do with her now?" he whispered, surveying in dismay the woman, who presently approached the outskirts of the crowd.

The scanty rags which she wore were colourless and threadbare. At her languid breast clung a whimpering infant. The child's face was pinched and blue with cold; it had famine in its eyes. Yet those eyes were a reflection of the mother's, and her's were still beautiful, as were her features and her form also, although it was thin and wasted. Not years, however, but want and suffering, had dimmed the lustre of her beauty. On looking again, you perceived that she was still young—so young that even the vanity of girlhood had not quite departed. The shamrocks woven in her hair were festooned with a grace that told of gentle birth; and suspended from her neck shone a small medallion, a jewel of quaint device and workmanship. Through all the struggles of poverty she had striven to keep this jewel from the clutches of the pawnbroker, and succeeded in

doing so. It was her pride to wear it—thus contrasting with the wretchedness of her general attire, by its richness telling of departed better days. Upon the medal was engraven the word "Volunteers," and the date '82. On the obverse, "Faith." Suspended from her shoulders was a small harp. It was worn as an ornament, or as a memory, like the locket—not for use or comfort. The strings of the instrument were detached and broken, it being many a year since that harp had been set to joyous music—since its spirit had freely spoken.

But why pursue the task of limning the conventional outlines of this familiar portrait? That face and form are known to all, and each one of us addresses her by the name which either his prejudices, or his interest, or his honesty suggests. By some she is regarded as a harmless and crazy Ophelia—a subject only for Christian feelings, or for the benevolent restraints of a lunatic asylum. By others, a fury—an amazon of wild and bloody instincts, lawless and fierce—a destroying Cassandra bent on fire and vengeance, to whom neither quarter nor mercy can be offered—towards whom coercion and cruelty become, in the interests of society, imperative. But by those who know her best, as a steadfast, long-suffering martyr, whom neither allurements nor persecution could detach from the old instincts

of her race—from her dream of independence—from faith in its attainment.

To complete the sketch, she carried, suspended from the arm which supported the child, a wicker basket of humble workmanship. It was filled with boxes of lucifer matches, fusees, and penny fireworks, such as school-boys and street vagrants delight to purchase. Evidently, by the sale of these simple, yet dangerous commodities, she managed to eke out a precarious livelihood.

From the majority of the assemblage, the woman met with glances of compassion, for her story was well known. But all did not look on her with such kindly eyes. Besides those connected with the business of the Caravan, who, by interest, disliked her, there were others, *pseudo*-friends, and unnatural blood-relations. These hated her as blood-relations usually do when interest instigates them. Because their animosity was well known, and also because being members of her own family, they were ironically designated her "*Members*." The term "Member" grew thereby to obtain an especially bitter significance. In the ears of the woman, it was the most hateful sound which could be uttered by the human voice, for by their intrigues she had been first betrayed, and by them she was still kept in poverty and misery.

These "Members" were, in part, composed of

thriftless adventurers and nameless pretenders, without either ability or training, who, precisely because they were out-at-elbowed nobodies, gave themselves airs, like all seedy bucks. Being mostly in bad estate themselves, they had an especial underbred contempt for the monastic virtue of poverty, which so grievously afflicted their relative.

Since the Caravan first started in business, it was surrounded by a flock of these gentry, who were always either running before it, or attending behind the wheels, in hope of getting a chance of something to fetch or carry—to fall in for the good fortune of some insignificant employment. To exhibit how little sympathy they had for the woman, they were always sneering at her miseries; and to show their assiduity to William Goodman, at all hours of the day or night, they haunted the purlieus of the Caravan, lounging about within call. When William appeared on the public platform, it was their business to applaud at the right place in his speeches, to get up a clap for him, to encourage laughter at his dreary jokes, and whisper puffery of the Caravan and its goods into the ears of the crowd.

William found them useful, and knew that they were cheap. Now and then, he cast a worn-out suit of livery to one or other of the gang, as a sort of reward, *pour encourager les autres*, as it

were, and these fits of intermittent generosity bore good fruit. It had the effect of making the body more eager and hopeful, of maintaining their expectations alive, and of keeping those who had yet received nothing, in a perpetual state of expectancy—always expecting, always wanting. It was because of this that they first acquired the name of the "*Gentlemen in Waiting.*" It was a second nick-name, and it likewise remained with them, only this difference, that the friends of the woman always referred to them with horror as "*Our Members,*" and the associates of William's Caravan with contempt, as the "*Gentlemen in Waiting.*"

William Goodman, after whispering apart with Lucifer on the platform, suddenly turned round, and intimating with a lofty, rather scornful wave of the hand, that he did not wish the woman to come nearer, began, in a flurried way, to collect the dispersed boxes of soft sawder which had fallen out of his hands. Then, clearing his voice with a premonitory cough, he was on the point of proceeding with his business, when the woman, in a few rapid steps, advanced quite close, crying out—

"I am come again, you see, Mr. Goodman. You thought to get rid of me on easy terms, that you had disposed of me with your usual cleverness, but I am here again, ready as ever to claim

my rights, to demand the redress, the justice which you promised me so often with such positive assurance. Don't think I come out of malice or envy, merely to disturb your occupation, to interfere with the routine and prosperous progress of your business. It is, indeed, no pleasure for me to be following you through the streets, making an exposure of my distress before the world. But when you promised me so much last year, and performed these promises so meanly afterwards, and solemnly vowed it, too, on your sacred honour, in the hearing of all the people. And you, a Goodman, who frequents both church and meeting-house, and reads his Bradlaugh and his Bible. You will see in the Bible how a good man should reverence his plighted word, and sacrifice even the interests of his commerce to keep it; and allow everyone his just rights, nor defraud the widow and the orphan."

"My friend—my good friend—if you have a claim to urge against me, there is the law. The law is there for you as well as for the greatest personage in the realm," said William, slowly adjusting the set of his solemn shirt collars, and staring around with a serene and dignified air. "You can summon me before the Court of Conscience if you please; or, if you like it better, before the police magistrate, my good woman.

But at present you really must move on. I shall positively insist upon it."

"Court of Conscience! You talk of conscience, you dare. You who, in defiance of conscience and of law, have taken possession, forcible possession, of all that I had in the world, even of my little furniture and things—of my little *Home*," shrieked the woman. "The home of my starving children, whom you have driven naked across the wide seas to seek the shelter of a roof. You who, not content with levelling my cabin, and destroying my industry, have even seized upon my scanty savings—robbing me. Making your own of all I had in the world. Hear him, good people; estimate the deceit of his heart, when such a man as this ventures to utter the word conscience."

"It's a shame. I say a darned shame, the way you rich fellows have been spunging on the substance of this poor woman," here remarked the Yankee, again stepping forward out of the crowd. "I happen to know something of her case, and I say, it is a *shame*," he added with emphasis, taking the quid from his mouth, and putting it to keep in the pocket of his velvet waistcoat.

"Mind your own business you," growled out Lucifer, furious at the interference, and alarmed at the effect of the woman's eloquence on the

crowd. "Mind your own business, will you, and let other folk manage theirs."

"Robert. My dear Robert, you should not, on any account, address our good friend Mr. Doodle in that tone of voice," purred William softly from the top of the platform. "You forget yourself. You forget that he is one of our most respected, most particular friends; and that of all others, he is the man for whom I have, personally, a deep and genuine regard."

"Bob! Bob, will you never learn to behave yourself. How can you be so very incautious," whispered Big John, an eminent associate of the firm, who happened to be standing behind the counter. "If I were you, I would at once say something conciliating to Mr. Doodle. It is too bad you never can acquire our English manners. Civility costs nothing: it is so very cheap, that you, an economist, should study to make use of it. Do make an effort to say something pleasant to Mr. Doodle."

"I didn't mean what I said then, in the heat of the moment," answered Lucifer, sulkily, "and if you wish, I suppose I'll withdraw it. It was, I admit, uncivil."

"It wasn't; and you don't withdraw the expression, not a bit," replied the gentleman from America, facing round with a brisk, well-satisfied air. "What you said was much to the point,

my friend, I'm thankful for your advice. You tell me to mind my own business—wal, I will."

"There! you've done it, Bob! with your confounded tongue," several voices exclaimed together, in subdued tones, behind the counter. "This fellow will be wanting money of us too—we shall be all beggared."

"It's writ on this bit of card, my business is; and 'tis quite right and regular that I should mind it, and leave other folks to manage their'n," added the Yankee, fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, and producing a frayed and dirty morsel of pasteboard, which he handed forward. "Here, gentlemen, my business is set forth there, and you may as well lay your heads together, and decide to settle it right off-hand."

Lucifer grudgingly received the ticket, and held it close up to his white eyelashes, pretending not to be able to read the writing, and then, with a shrug, passed it on to his principal on the platform, as if it had been quite beyond his skill to make it out.

William Goodman, too, affected to have the like difficulty, for he pulled out his gold double eyeglass, and peered over the card for some seconds.

"*Alabama* is the word. There is but one word on the ticket, and that word is *Alabama*. I

can read it even at this distance," bawls out the Jew, laughing.

"Quite right, my friend, Alabyma's the ticket," chimes in the Yankee, grinning.

"Well, Mr. Doodle, my good friend, and what may I ask do you expect us to do in this matter?" said William Goodman, drawing a long breath, and closing up his eyeglass with a becoming air of resignation. "We were always good friends, you and I; were we not? I trust we shall always continue to be so. It is right that we should, for we are both of the same habit of mind; we have the same views of futurity; frequenting as we do the same meeting-house, and I think we should always endeavour to pull kindly together, Mr. Doodle; don't you? Now, like a good sir, say what you expect us to do in this matter."

"Shell out!" said the Yankee.

"You were always such a humourist. I believe if actually dying you should still stop to have your joke," said William, affecting to laugh.

"As I've made no arrangements for dyin' at present, it don't concern any one whether I depart from this planet laughing or otherwise," answered the American, in a nasal tone. Every man should mind his own business, as our friend observes, and as paying at present is your business, so receiving happens to be mine. I'd like to see your money."

"But we haven't any money. There isn't as much earned this morning, I protest, as would suffice to purchase two pence worth of old cabbage-stumps for the donkey, yonder," exclaimed Lucifer, who was the treasurer and privy purse of the Caravan. In matters of finance, he was false from policy, and a miser by natural disposition. As he spoke he shook a few halfpence from his purse out on the table; "it is all the cash we have to carry on with," he said. "And, as for that," he added, nodding at the Alabama ticket on the counter, "as for that, I don't believe there is so much money in the whole world."

"There is a five or maybe a ten pound note pinned up in the bottom of that bag," sung out the Yankee, attempting to seize it. "Turn the bag inside out at once, you old jackall, and let us see."

"Nonsense! We can't have this sort of work going on here. We can't permit these manners," said William, interposing with decided air. "It isn't respectable. It isn't right; and nothing disreputable or wrong shall be permitted, with my knowledge, as long as I am head of the firm. I 'd rather retire altogether from business. I'd rather sacrifice all the property I have in the world than consent to anything which is in itself wrong"——

"Gammon!" called out Ben Trovato.

"Than do anything of which my conscience cannot approve," added William, not noticing the interruption in extreme fright, lest the Yankee should succeed in getting hold of the purse, and discover the £50 note which was pinned up safe in the bottom of it.

"Let us have the money," said the Yankee, "and keep your manners and morality for yourself."

"I'd rather consent to almost any payment than see you taking the part of this wretched woman—than have this continual bickering going on," continued William, waving his hand. "It destroys confidence, stops business, and brings no profit to anybody. Therefore, Mr. Doodle, we shall look into this invoice of yours, and must endeavour, in some way, to balance the account. If you will just step across to the public-house, over the way, with these gentlemen—indicating the sleeping partners of the Caravan—they will go over the items of the account with you, and then if everything is found to be correct"——

"Then, it shall be squared, I suppose," observed the creditor.

"Patience! good brother, patience," said William, blandly; "you will see it turn out best for all of us in the end. Do like a sensible fellow, step over to the public-house."

"I don't mind; that looks business, and I'll

stand drink, by way of discount," said the American moving away; for the prospect of getting paid naturally altered the face of affairs, and put him into better humour.

The poor woman's spirit fell when the Yankee disappeared. In him she had lost an ally, a possible advocate. Once he turned the corner, Lucifer swiftly pulled out his famous bludgeon, laid it ostentatiously on the counter; and William, bustling about on the platform, declared, in peremptory tones, that "he had resolved not to put up with it any longer; and that, decidedly, she must move on."

They thought it safe to be off-handed now, judging that the woman had no longer friends among the crowd. They were, however, mistaken.

She was strong in despair that morning, neither admonitions, threats, nor even force, if they had ventured so far, could control her. She was eloquent, reckless—ultimately her persistent interruptions brought the business of the Caravan again to a standstill. Worst of all, the energy of her language was beginning to produce sympathetic excitement among the crowd. To employ force was out of the question; it would have been highly dangerous even to threaten it.

Presently, she came quite close and struck the sides of the waggon with her clenched

hand, the sinews and the bone showing through the skin of the wasted arm as she bared it in the effort; and, though she struck with all her might, still the blow was a feeble one, and scarcely resounded against the strong sides of the machine. What could one woman do against a society of strong men, banded together by ties of interest and of avarice? Little, apparently; yet as she passed swiftly round the Caravan, heedless and desperate, a few of the match-boxes and fire-works from her basket fell down amidst the loose straw which lay scattered on every side. Some of this ignited, perhaps by accident, there was a sudden blaze, and several of the company had to rush together to stamp it out.

Hereupon Lucifer ran up to William, white with fear—"You must do something with her," he said. "You must really try and manage her, either with your tongue or in some other way; this sort of thing cannot possibly go on without bringing disaster. She'll presently end by setting fire to the straw with her confounded matches, and crackers, and things. She 'll smoke us out, and we 'll have to run for our lives, and lose all our property, that will be the end of it. Try if you cannot think of something to say. Get up on the platform again, and persuade her to keep quiet, promise her anything she likes, or that you like, as usual it does n't matter—only get her to

be quiet anyway, until we settle Doodle's account at all events."

As there seemed no help for it, William had to step forward, and with a ghastly smile upon his sallow face, addressed the woman—

"In goodness' name, pray, my poor creature, tell me once for all what it is you mean by this extravagant proceeding? Plainly—What is it you expect me to do for you further? How is it possible for me to ameliorate your worldly condition, or even carry on my own business, if you persist in these 'reckless demonstrations'? Every favour in my power have I not most generously *promised* you already? Have you a right to expect any more? Has any reasonable creature right to expect any more than that?"

"I don't want your favours," answered the woman. "I don't want your insulting alms, or your ostentatious concessions. I never sought for them, nor for anything more than what was justly belonging to me by right. I want my own, and nothing more. Justice and my natural rights. Nothing more than that. Nothing less than it either. Make up your mind, and shape your course accordingly. Nothing else shall ever content me," she cried aloud. "I know what you have to say about your kindness, your favours, your generosity. I have heard it often enough, but I am tired of that. I am not a fool. I know

what it means. You pretend to be generous and are all the while puffing yourself in th newspapers and handbills as a benefactor, witl my money in your pocket, my substance in you granaries, and my starving children robbed o their inheritance—gone away from me over th sea."

"You hear this, good people," William ex claimed, turning to address the crowd. "I ca bear almost anything myself, for I have wisel schooled and disciplined my nature to the patien practice of endurance; but ingratitude, I confess quite overcomes me. Ingratitude, more stron than traitors' arms, as the poet tells us, vanquishe the noble heart. When the beloved hand c Brutus struck, great Cæsar fell. All of us wh are fathers know how sharper than serpent' tooth is the thankless child. That is why it sting me, for truly I have made a child of this woman My own child, had she been so in the order c nature, I could not have loved her more. have done everything for her, chastized her lik a father, petted her like a mother. I have bee both parents to her, turn and turn about, an now, with your own eyes, you see how she repay me."

"Both parents indeed!" exclaimed the woma bitterly; "ay! both, stepfather and stepmother.

"It was only last year that I conferred a furthe

ndulgence upon her," William continued at the op of his voice, so that all might hear; "it was nly last year that she fancied a new play-thing r her children. I gave way to her humour. I hen bought a most expensive toy. A beautiful ttle model Church, with jimcrack ornaments, tained windows, steeple, congregation, parsons— verything complete. It cost me fully Three hillings and Sixpence of British money, and he immediately handed it over to her boys, to reak up in wantonness, to amuse themselves by nocking the heads off the parsons."——

"You were tired enough of that church, and anted to get rid of it anyway," answered the oman." It was neither an ornament nor a com- rt in your own house, but a nuisance and annoy- nce, collecting flies, and moths, and caterpillars. ou were glad enough to find any one to take it off our hands; and as I was there you made a con- nience of me to serve yourself, as usual—that always your way. Ever since you have been ading on the generosity of that Act, puffing urself as a great and generous man."——

"Afterwards when she took a, peculiar agricul- ral freak into her head," William went on, "I yself rented a farm for her, and fenced it round ith deep drains and ditches, so that no landlord uld intrude upon her boundaries, unless for the gitimate purpose of doubling the rent, nor in-

vade her rights, unless indeed he had a pole
his hand, and determined to inconvenience hi
self or his agent, by wading through a mass
gutter and slush. And to complete all," Willia
continued, "I had the ground surveyed and ma
ped out, so that she might fold the map safe und
her pillow, and sleep at night with a content
mind. The drawing and surveying of this m
cost me quite One Shilling and Sixpence, at lea
which, added to the expenditure about the Churc
makes her stand me at this moment fully Fi
Shillings of sterling coin. All my own mone
too, and expended for her benefit in the sh
space of one twelvemonth—of one twelvemont
only," William repeated with emphasis.

"Of your own money! How can it be yo
own money," the woman burst out with a mocki
laugh, "when two years ago, in the face of t
world, you admitted that you owed me a wh
pound note. How dare you talk of spending yo
own cash for my interest, when I have it fr
your own mouth, on your own showing, ev
giving credit for the payment of the Church a
farm, that you must still stand in my debt
at least fifteen shillings."

At this the populace began to cheer; ma
voices cried out that they had distinctly hea
William make that admission about the pou
note.

"It is not about the money—about the Fifteen hillings I care," the woman continued, gaining fresh courage. "He is welcome to keep that he would only put a roof over my little family o shelter us from the weather; that is all I seek. want a home of my own, no matter how humble be. It is the privilege of a woman to rule at ome. Every Englishman will admit that. Every nglishman's home is his castle."——

"No Irish gentleman needs a home so long as e has his *Cawstle* to go to," observed one of the Members," with a superb air.

"Why should not a woman with children be nceded the same advantages as a strong Engshman who is able to work? Justice insists hat I shall be allowed at least the same rights s he. And I stand here, not for favours, but r justice only," declaimed the woman, not heedng the interruption of the "member"—springing p upon a bench. "I appeal to this crowd, I put he question to the great body of people collected ere—people of every religion, of all politics, of very nationality. Natives and foreigners alike, ask them all, Is there any reason why I, a oman, should not have domestic rule? why I, mother, should be denied the comforts of a ome?"

There was applause, and loudest from the Englishmen; because those present were men of

humble degree, who like the woman, had suffered from the pressure of capital, from the tyranny of class and caste, but not from the worse tyranny of bigotry and prejudice, as she had. It seemed to them that the woman's claim was reasonable, and they began to gather in groups and mutter among themselves, looking hard at William on the platform.

This added to Goodman's annoyance; as amongst working Englishmen, his name had been popular, and he desired to keep it so. When he saw the swarthy uplifted hands of the operatives and mechanics clapping away at the woman's speech, he could not bear it, but hurried off the platform into the inner compartments of the Caravan. His discomfiture naturally provoked ill humour.

"Little John," who happened to be scribbling on a slate as the great man passed in, was cuffed for being in the way, and when the astonished little man inquired the reason of such an unmerited assault, he was rudely reproved, and despatched to bring Big John into the waggon.

Now, Big John had been screening himself behind the railings at the other side of the waggon, and, though present at the whole dialogue between William and the woman, had not ventured to open his mouth even once all the morning.

Big John and Little John were men of very different calibre.

When the Caravan first started in business, the proprietors were driven to adopt various devices in order to attract attention, and make the institution take with the public. In those early days the Caravan partook quite as much of the character of a show-box as of a pedlar's booth—tumblers, Jack-puddings, and famous boxers, both white and coloured, and all sorts of show-off fellows were hired by the proprietary to strut about on the platform, and attract a crowd each day, by exhibiting their persons before the regular business of selling off the stock commenced.

Big John, amongst other members of the acrobatic profession, was first engaged in this capacity, but he increased so fast in size and bulk, under the influence of the unaccustomed good living which all the servants of the Caravan enjoyed, that he soon became as celebrated a giant, as he had been an acrobat before; and ended by being usually styled the giant of the company, as Little John was fittingly designated the dwarf of it.

In front of the booth, a horizontal bar, and some pulleys and ropes, and other simple gymnastic appliances, had been constructed for Big John, to come and exhibit his tumbling tricks upon. These feats of his were greatly admired. But Little John never, in all his life, had been

able to do anything worth noticing, though he had abundant opportunities, and was always trying, for he was very ambitious. His one speciality and only talent was his extreme smallness. He had a positive genius for every sort of littleness. And as he used to swagger about with such an absurdly consequential air, people called him, in derision, the Little Lord—otherwise, there was nothing lordly, or respectable about him.

For a time people had laughed at the sight of this little person, strutting to and fro on the stage, with the exaggerated air and swagger of a man of decent size; but soon finding that he did not know how to do anything whatever, they grew tired, and when he showed himself, there were hisses; so the management wisely abandoned the idea of taking him into the business as a partner. They withdrew him altogether from the public gaze, gave him no functions whatever; in fact, intimated that they were not too eager to retain his services, or have him seen about the waggon at all. This hurt the vanity of the little man, and to show spite, he used occasionally to write letters to the newspapers, disparaging the character of the business, or rather the management of it, and by circulating spiteful handbills among the crowd, endeavoured to teaze William into entertaining his pretensions to receive regular and permanent employment from the firm.

At other times, he would adopt quite an opposite line, and come secretly to William, offering his services gratuitously, and volunteering to write out puffing placards and advertisements for him, to run of messages, or do any other insignificant dirty work that was wanted.

During working hours, and overtime also, he was always employed writing at his desk; a sheet of foolscap folded made a fit and becoming covering for his head. It was odd, notwithstanding the mediocrity of his talents, that he didn't succeed in accomplishing some of his many enterprizes, for his industry was prodigious.

Big John, the giant, was, we repeat, a very different person from his little namesake, in mind as well as stature. Not content with the notoriety which his great size obtained, nor with his fame as a gymnast—in this he was surpassed by another professional attached to the waggon, Silken Thomas by name, of whom, more presently—he continued to exercise his muscles, until he acquired a solid proficiency in a number of new and interesting tumbling and jumping feats, which, in due time, he exhibited to the partners, and astonished them by his agility and power.

The principals were greatly pleased, and finding his new acquisitions, also, to take with the public, William Goodman raised his salary to a considerable figure, and had a new suit of fine

and fashionable clothes made for him, quite diffe rent from the Yorkshire gaiters and Quaker broad brim, which he had worn from his humble birth Simple-minded Big John grew to take much pleasure in wearing the new suit, and when of duty, or resting from the fatigues of performance he would put on his laced, ornamental coat and in hat and feather, with a gay court sword dangling between his legs, strut on the platform before all the people. Sometimes the sword would get crosswise, and throw him awkwardly out o step, and the plumes of the cocked hat flutte into his eyes: it was not an imposing nor a be coming exhibition.

Big John grew to be an important personage in the business, until, like many others, he began to spoil in prosperity. The rise in fortune affected his habits: he began to live too well, to work negligently, and so became short-winded and stout, unable to perform the tumbling feats which had made him famous. He acquired airs in the cocked hat and official livery, affected to disparage his humble origin, to despise the profession of a saltimbanco, even went so far as to assert a right to sit at the same board as the partners on terms of assumed equality. He became, at last, so intolerably forward and familiar, that the management decided not to endure it, but at the first opportunity to get rid of him. This was duly

accomplished, and so his ambition of obtaining a permanent partnership came to an end. Yet there was nothing like a misunderstanding between Big John and the heads of the firm. That would not have suited anybody.

He still enjoyed the prestige of being associated in a vague, inofficial way with the progress of the business, and it was a recognized advantage to the firm to have Big John's honest face and portly figure seen occasionally about the premises.

Though people had lost faith in his tumbling, they still clung to the traditions about his honesty; and the regular customers thought there could not be cheating or false dealing as long as Big John continued to be seen about the premises.

The public is not always clear-sighted about its favourites, and in this impression it possibly overshot the mark.

When Little John brought his large namesake into William Goodman's presence, the latter received his fat friend very coldly, or literally, very warmly, for he began to address him in the plainest language. When annoyed, in private life, when the public was not looking on, William was no economist of strong language. The William of the closet, surrounded by assistants and underlings, and the bland and smiling Goodman of the platform, appealing to his customers,

were two very different beings. Abroad, he was meekness itself—a lamb; but, oftentimes, at home, a wild animal—a lion—all teeth and claws; fierce in invective, relentless, implacable; as arrogant, supercilious a martinet as ever breathed.

He had method in his anger, however. He did not fly into the face of Big John as, in the same crisis of bad temper, he might have done to a lesser man, but he turned on him all the same, with a good business-like, logical, working-majority sort of abuse.

"You are the main cause of all the trouble this woman outside is giving us," he said, jerking off his white neckcloth and flinging it on the table. This was the well-known sign of battle. "You are the origin of all the mischief which she has done, is doing, to the business. It was you who first put a false ambition into her head—gave her notions above her sphere, with your confoundedly indiscreet tongue, your loose talk, and your street tumbling tricks at Dublin, Limerick, and elsewhere."

Though taken by surprise, Big John found an answer readily enough.

"You chiefly are to blame," he replied. "Your volubility first deceived the poor woman. You are the real author of the famous "Ideas"—those false ideas of yours clothed in such fervid language. Hot words, that the orator had so humbly

to eat in the street afterwards," laughed out Big John; to eat, or to quibble out of, like the liar Parolles, or the braggart Pistol, while the cudgel of public opinion rattled about his ears. Good! to have you turn on me at this hour of the day; it is your own handy-work altogether."

William protested.

Big John totally denied.

"Between you both; half and half about," squeaked Little John, under the table, taking notes.

Then William and his antagonist began to pull pieces of old newspapers out of their pockets, and to read each one the former speeches of the other with great emphasis. Each disputant showed how perversely culpable the other had been, and proved it deliciously with the text of the newspaper; but so eager was the contest that both spoke together, and neither listened. In truth, nobody heard a word except Little John, who, with an eye to business, got out his scissors, and began to snip off the ends of the newspapers, as they slipped under the table, chuckling inwardly; for he thought how these might be all pasted together, and worked up into a new pamphlet.

The little man had a mania for writing pamphlets, which no influence could quell or extirpate. His mite of a soul had years ago been possessed of by a printer's devil, and neither the sarcasms

of critics nor the quills of reviewers could exorcise the fiend.

When the contention reached this point, all the assistants gathered hurriedly into the room, to try and prevent scandal, and put an end to the dispute.

William was not displeased at the interruption. He recognized that Big John was having the uppermost of the argument; so abandoning the discussion, sought around for some other object on which to vent his temper. Big John was too sizable an antagonist, and William naturally preferred selecting one not so evenly a match. The company was, however, composed of mere rank and file, mediocrities unworthy of notice — unworthy of the great anger that filled him.

Then a curtain at the aperture of the compartment divided, and two mighty personages entered — The Great Dispencer and Phœnix Apollo.

Ha! the guilty ones—the very victims which his ill humour demanded.

The Great Dispencer, and Phœnix Apollo, although great lords, were partners in the business of the Caravan, and drew no small share of its profits; for in modern times great lords have got over their prejudices about business, and think it no stain to derive incomes by way of trade. Both these personages were trustees and

managers of the principal outlying estates of the Firm, which were situated at a distance. It was on these estates that the angry woman rested her claim, and because of the bad management there that she had become an ungovernable termagant. It was an apt opportunity therefore to reproach them, and demand account of their bungling stewardship.

The Great Dispencer, if the highest official, was second in importance to the other. They both hailed direct from the Castle-yard, a locality to which we shall have more distinctly to refer. At this Castle, the Great Dispencer paradoxically dispensed the law, and dispensed with the laws. He dispensed police and detectives broadcast for instance; but, with equal off-handedness, he dispensed with the liberty of the press, with personal liberty, and with the Habeas Corpus. He was a great Statesman—author of the cardinal maxim, "That everything is illegal which the police don't like." It was with that working principle he always governed, and governed successfully. He was a humourist too, be it noted to his credit. He delighted to assemble honest citizens, arrayed in swords and court suits, their home-spun spouses in lappets and bangles. He dispensed hospitably to these gentry; but he dispensed also with courtesy to the gentlemen of the press, who came to record the special features of his

festive dispensations. To the country under hi
care he was especially a "Messenger of Peace"; h
dispensed peace and prosperity—chiefly in afte
dinner speeches. But he also dispensed with
knowledge of its people, as he did with capacit
or statesmanship. Seeing how many point
were *per contra*, it was to his credit that h
governed, notwithstanding. Only the countr
was not grateful. It would have dispensed n
only with the peace which he brought, but eve
with the "Messenger of Peace" likewise.

In this task, or puzzle, of government he wa
assisted by Phœnix Apollo, the superb. He
was a great personage. In the first place, Phœni
Apollo was son to the Great Mogul. In certai
districts at name of the Great Mogul, peop
drop on their knees and kiss the dust. The so
true to his blood, had the air and supercilio
manners of all the Moguls to a marked degre
He differed vastly from the Great Dispencer
some essentials. For instance, the Dispenc
was sometimes ashamed of exhibiting ignoran
in public, but Phœnix Apollo, son to the Gre
Mogul, thought ignorance rather becoming—eve
bragged of possessing it in his speeches. H
governed awry or otherwise, as it suited h
humour; and when he meddled with business h
often marred it, but was liked all the better f
that. People said it was the birth-right a

privilege of the Moguls to meddle and mar—an attribute of the order. Besides, in a certain sense, he could not err; for, when anything of importance went wrong through mismanagement, there was ever found some miserable scapegoat to step forward, and swear 'twas he had done it, and not the Lord Apollo.

If His Highness should have made some flagrant blunder, say, issued a false proclamation, it was at once announced that Rag, or Famish, or Toad, or Tadpole, had composed the foolish poster. If the people were bludgeoned at a public meeting, it was the truculent Corporal Nym, or Peto, or Bardolph, who had shed their plebeian blood, and not the knight Sir John, the captain of the band. Rag, or Famish, or some other such spatch-cock, was incontinently placed upon the spit before the flames of popular anger, and deputed to roast for my lord. A supply of such instruments was always ready for an emergency at the Castle-yard. Victims, whose office in life was to carry the weight of other men's transgressions, and perish to save the reputation of the great.

"So you, gentlemen, have condescended to appear," William bursts out, as the two entered arm-in-arm, and stood apart with a high-bred, conceited air. "You arrive in time to enjoy the display of fireworks which you have laboured

so well to provide. In truth, you are skilf artists, able conjurors, excellent partners. Tl business has every reason to be obliged f your good offices—to be proud of you both Then William began to march to and fro, strikir and pushing about the chairs and tables in a w that resounded through the wooden structure the Waggon, shaking the whole fabric. Tl lesser members of the company took fright at h vehemence, began to creep under the forms ar benches, to hide out of the way behind the cu tains. Even Lucifer, silenced by the storm, s demurely blinking in the corner.

The two lords had edged silently away in the darkest division of the apartment. Willia stopped suddenly, and coming close up, glared them afresh.

" Of course I shall put you both up there, soon as this row is over; make up your minds that," he said, pointing to the topmost shelf the Waggon. " I'll arrange that neither of yc shall have another opportunity of procuring repetition of this outrage."

" I really did it all for the best; I have a co science to guide me—a character too," mumble the Great Dispencer. " I obtained excellent a vice—' legal advice.' I pledge my honour ever thing was done for the best."

" Numbskull!"

"I always held, and hold still, that the infernal woman outside is only to be put down by choking, by plenty of it," said Lord Phœnix, with an air of defiance.

"Jackanapes!" hissed William.

"It is my opinion, nevertheless," said Apollo.

"If I had only known that," replied William, mockingly making a reverence, "if I had known that in time, it would have caused an entire change in my policy and method of doing business."

"I'll not endure this; I'll not accept such contemptuous treatment, such disrespectful language, from any mere—mere Man," cried out the Phœnix, turning pale. "You outrage heaven itself in addressing me in such a tone. You forget yourself. You forget that my nature is divine, not human, like yours. It is impious."

"Eh?"

"If you attempt to do it again, I'll—I'll tell my father, the Great Mogul," urged the trembling Phœnix in quivering tones.

"Shiver the Great Mogul!" burst out William, bringing his fist with a thwack upon the table. Both Apollo and the Dispencer stepped backward. "Shiver the Great Mogul!" repeated William. "If you, top sawyers, venture to adopt divine airs, I'll soon hurl you from your perch—ay! the whole set—or else tackle you to the shafts, make you

drag the machine about for a living, like an drudge—like the donkey there. Divinities, for sooth! Let me catch you attempting to mount o the high horse; let me discover even that yo dream of it."

"I never did, never tried to do it; the notio never even entered my head," whimpered th Great Dispencer. "I'll apologise—I'm sorry fo what has happened; I'm willing to atone for th past, to do anything you please, anything me nial—I'll even take a broom and sweep out th floor of the Waggon, if you exact it; only don' as you are a Christian, put me to sit up there o the cold shelf by myself."

"I never intended you to be by yourself," re plied William, nodding at the Phœnix.

"Is it me?" inquired Apollo, with tears in h eyes.

"I'm sick of you," said William.

"But—but I'll eat humble pie too, if yc like!" exclaimed the Lord Phœnix, blubbering- "humble pie, notwithstanding my great parer tage."

"By Jupiter! you shall, both of you. Ha Here a volley of stones from the mob outsi rattled against the sides of the Caravan. One the missiles burst through the window near th Dispencer's head, and, grazing it, fell in th middle of the floor.

"Lucky your brains escaped," sneered William; "we never could have repaired such a loss. What a pair! Look each other in the face, and say what you think of it, now. Hearken to the turmoil you have raised. To think, after my care and trouble, my manœuvring—to think of a disaster brought about by such agents. 'Tis enough to make one throw down the drumsticks, and give it up. I have a mind," he added, "I have a mind to let the woman and the mob batter the Caravan to pieces—destroy the business, and the whole concern. It would be only serving you out to suffer it."

Here Lucifer interposed. Business was business, he said; and, considering things from a commercial point of view, he did not think that at such a time to be wrangling amongst themselves was the right or best way of doing business.

"'Tis a relief to one's feelings," said William.

"But there is no money made by it," answered his clever partner.

"The problem is to silence or pacify the woman outside," said Big John; "until that is done we can have no hope of a prosperous trade; and I confess I don't see my way at present to go about doing that."

"The only way is for you to try your hand at it," said Lucifer. "It is the only thing," he

added, in reply to the grimace with which Big John received the proposal."

"Do!" said William, softening in tone; "Do us this good turn for 'auld lang syne.' She knows the sound of your pleasant honest voice, and 'tis said that she liked you once."

"She wont listen to me now," said Big John uneasily.

"Try all the same. You only forgot your fine promises. You left them unperformed, nothing more. You did not tie her up—stifle and strangle her, or flog her with beneficent coercion stripes for venturing to remember those awkward promises, as we, as some of us did—ahem!" said William, dryly.

"Like a man, like a big man as you are, like a man of business, perform this little job for us," urged Lucifer. There are whole basketsful of stuff to be sold off before sunset; and we never will accomplish it, or get through our business if you don't succour us."

Very reluctantly, Big John went out to harangue the mob, and, if he might, to pacify the woman.

An audible commotion arose without, as the big man stepped upon the platform; but he re-entered the Waggon precipitately. He had not been well received outside. They had even thrown things. One miscreant struck him with

ome degraded object, and his honest face was lushed—indignant—stained. Faugh! He had o retire to the inner cabinet.

"What do you think now?" he said, reappearng in a few moments, composedly addressing William; "I trust you are convinced that she vill not attend to me any more than yourself."

"I don't know what on earth to do," said William.

"It never was so serious before, in my time at east," chimed in Lucifer, gloomily.

"We must send for Silken Thomas," said Big John, demurely; "he is the man for the occasion."

William started at this suggestion, but his countenance fell.

"Silken Thomas might do it, perhaps successfully; I agree with you there. He should be able o extricate us from this dilemma, but its an unpleasant office, and I doubt if Silken Thomas volunteers for it," he monologued.

"He is one of us," observed Lucifer.

"I fear he has forgotton his obligations to us, though," answered William, with an injured expression of countenance. "Silken Thomas has already had so much, that he has little more to expect, and he is clever enough to understand that. There are no more favours to come, and, therefore, no gratitude to be expected from Silken Thomas," added William, ruefully. He is a very

good man, doubtless, and would never perhaps d wrong except under pressure; but *he* would, I fea rather commit even a sin than commit himself.

"Anyway we must have him—there is no on else," said Big John.

So Little John was sent out the back way t find Silken Thomas, and he was cautioned to b brisk, and not to loiter at the newspaper office and bookshop windows, cogging extracts for hi pamphlets.

A more accomplished artist than Silken Thoma did not exist. He was by original profession a acrobat, like Big John, and no gymnast in an circus understood the tumbling business bette He could stand equally well on his head or on hi hands, and twist and writhe in every directio with consummate ease. It was by his early prac tise at "the Bar" that he acquired such extraor dinary suppleness of limb. No conceivable cor tortion was beyond his powers. He could sprin up into the air, from perch to perch, like Lulu; c walk the tight rope like Blondin; or suspend fro the trapèze like Léotard. He could spin roun on the point of his toe so fast that no eye migh determine in what direction he was twirling; and notwithstanding the cervical vertebrae, twist an jerk his head backward and forward so fast tha it seemed as if he had two or three different face at the same time. That he possessed many di

ferent kinds of voice was certain; indeed so excellent was he at ventriloquism that no variation of tone or sound of any kind was difficult for him to imitate. In this way he was often able to catch and control the mood or temper of an audience, no matter how hostile or ill-disposed its elements were. No wonder, therefore, that his services were in much request, and that every show-box in the kingdom was anxious to strike a bargain with him—not only an agile tumbler, but a clever and successful actor to boot.

The most remarkable professional feat which Silken Thomas ever achieved, and which most contributed to make his fortune, was the very difficult one of sitting on two stools together at the same time. All the leading muscular fellows of the day had been at this trick again and again, and had failed in it, covering themselves with ridicule, provoking the derision of every audience, by the absurd position which each successive failure had left them in. For if either of the stools yielded ever so slightly, or stirred even, while the performer was in a critical position poised between them, then the main support, either on the right hand or on the left, gave suddenly, and he fell between the two stools, often with broken ribs or a dislocated back, or otherwise so seriously incapacitated or damaged, that his posturing days were over for ever.

The trick of the "Two Stools," therefore, came to be regarded as a philosopher's stone, a delusion, a fantastical impossibility, by "the acrobatic profession"—a delusive though very seductive temptation—a thing to dream of, if impossible to attain, and, therefore, constantly inviting fresh victims among the ambitious "juniors" to make the attempt. It looked so easy, that those only who had a personal trial of the difficulty could believe in it.

When Silken Thomas first notified his intention of hazarding the "Two Stools" problem William Goodman became alarmed, lest his favourite should fall down between and break his back, or become a cripple for life. Naturally he did his best to dissuade him from the enterprise; but finding that neither argument nor remonstrance prevailed, and feeling what a loss it would be to the business if an accident were to overtake such a valuable member of the Firm, William, in the interest of the establishment, determined to provide a resource against the chance of a catastrophe. He obtained a sack fashioned like a cushion, and had it stuffed with the softest wool, and so arranged it in the middle between the two stools, that if either of them were to slip or give way, the cushion would be in the right spot to receive the shock, and break the fall of the performer.

This was done in secret; but Silken Thomas kept his eyes on the alert, and detected the device. It suggested an easy way of making his fortune at a stroke, with small risk to his bones; and this was how he managed—When the day fixed for the exhibition arrived, and the crowd was all agape, and Silken Thomas was apparently in the midst of his difficulty, balancing between the two creaky and very ricketty supports, while the excitement of the spectators was at the highest—all at once, instead of struggling to avoid the yawning gulf between the stools, as other artists had, Silken Thomas, with a hand firmly placed upon either support, of his own accord let himself drop swiftly and noiselessly down between them both. There was a scream from the spectators when this occurred, and a general rush to see what had become of the popular favourite. People could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw him safe, not broken or mangled, or even damaged, but sitting upon the Woolsack, and smiling up at them all.

It was then perceived that no accident had occurred, but that this was a new rendering of the "Two Stool trick"—his own exclusive invention—and people clapped hands, as they always do at any successful achievement, no matter how selfish and vulgar its nature be. They were delighted with the craft and cleverness

displayed, and Silken Thomas became, if pos
sible, more popular than before. From tha
moment he was declared the only successfu
executant of the "Two Stools and Woolsac
Trick;" and William, in order to commemorat
the event, and also to advertise the feat with
view to business, got a sign-painter to execute
portrait of his favourite, to ornament the front
the Waggon. He was painted sitting upon th
Wool-sack, with a crown upon his brow—a brand
new Britannia metal one. This was the crow
of victory, which he had gained, by the "Tw
Stool" achievement. His eyes were directe
heavenwards, with a pious and tearful expressio
—the tearful effect was conveyed by the whi
handkerchief in his hand. In the background, th
"Two Stools," by which he had conquered fo
tune, were gracefully arranged, festooned wi
wreaths of the "Wild flowers of Tullahogue
which are said to exhale an excellent fragranc
In the foreground, rows of aspiring young gent
men in wigs and gowns were on their knees,
ranged as votaries or worshippers, offering praye
and incense to the image. To the right, an Engli
minister pointed to the "Two Stools," with th
legend issuing from his mouth, "*Pour encourag
vous autres.*" It was very picturesque.

When the populace saw the picture, and und
stood its meaning, they were more pleased th

ver; and declared that the crown sat becomingly pon his brow, that he was one of nature's noble- nen, and should be distinguished by a title. To hich whim of the people, clever William Good- nan readily consented; and from henceforth, in ll the puffing notices and trade advertisements onnected with the concern, Silken Thomas was et down as a "Lord," and was designated, in ull style and title, as *Lord Silken Thomas of the ilver Tongue.*

They had aptly selected the style of "Silver- ongue" for my Lord, because of the perfec- ion to which, through culture, he had brought hat susceptible organ. Marvellous, indeed, as the care which he had devoted to the ducation of his tongue in early life. Incessant he pains expended in the rudimentary balancing nd modulation of it. He had commenced to ractise betimes, and looked a long way a-head, s his habit was in all things. It was with a iew to the perfect training of his tongue that he irst simulated delicacy of health.

He pretended to have a bad chest; and, by ay, for the benefit of his lungs, used to dose imself morning and evening with quantities of od-liver oil. This was merely to keep his tongue mooth by virtue of the unctuous fluid, and, also, hat his whole system might become impregnated

with the characteristic qualities of that fi whence the oil was extracted.

One result of this treatment was to make hi extremely popular. The effect of this medici upon his manners attracted a multitude of friend In a word, he was not only a great and succes ful man, but an irreproachable one likewise, f in all his life he had never committed— blunder.

If he had original views or stern principles his own, he was not always flaring them up in everybody's eyes, as is the habit with some sil people. He rarely disagreed, never dispute with his neighbour. Like Polonius, he possess the useful faculty of being able to distingui either a camel or a whale in the sky at the bi ding of a social superior, or of a loftier intel gence. He was kind, good, benevolent, tepid a running fountain of cordiality, which kept we ing up in perpetual overflow. He had a beami eye, like the lady in the melody, and beams flattery and compliment were the rays which emitted. In the art of shaking hands he excelle At the first squeeze an impression of warm and genuine sympathy was conveyed; when t gentle pressure of his tepid fingers relaxed, y felt as if bearing off a blessing in your palm.

Lord Silvertongue was in the hands of h French valet when Little John arrived, all eag

with the message from his master, William Goodman. His hair was being curled for a court ball, some of the ringlets were still stiff in curl-papers. It was plain, therefore, that even in this great emergency the duties of his toilet could not be interrupted. So Little John had to return, with all haste, to the Caravan, to report that, as my Lord was having his hair curled, William Goodman and his friends would have to come look for Lord Silvertongue if they wanted him.

"That petit monsieur, Leetle John, is not improving in his looks, milor," the valet exclaimed, breathing on his curling irons, as the excited messenger departed with a bound. "Quel petit drôle. It looks as if he never could manage to get any clothes whatever to fit. However small the tailor makes his coat, the leetle man always shrinks smaller, until at length no garment can be got to look as if it belonged to or was made for him. Un peu a coté, milord; je m'en vais vous coller un vrai accroche-cœur sur la tempe. Again, he has the ambition to dress himself like some man of stature. Fantaisie de petit homme. Now, long ago he seized himself of a suit belonging to feu Sir Robert, le Ministre célèbre. It was amusant to survey le petit singe draped in the large habits de ce colosse. It was most ridicule; the great hat coming down on his shoulders, and the skirts of his long coat trailing

by the ground. Everybody laughed. No matter Leetle John went strutting about all the same and was very happy. He fancied himself another Sir Robert. Shall I make you the toupet, milord We are now at the crisis, and must decide Le toupet est de fort bon gênre. Many lord illustres comme, milord, have worn the toupet It is intellectual—it is respectable—it is sob —at the same time that it is courtly, becoming and de grande politique.

"I doubt if it be at present quite à la mod Louis; and you know it is for me of all things essential to be à la mode."

"Naturally—since milord has married himself à la mode."

"Louis!"

"Pardon, milord! Ce n'est qu' une plaisanterie. But assurément, I believe the toupet be de bon goût; it is now of renaissance. I have studied the subject from the best authorities, and can speak also fortified by experience. I find, consulting the highest references—on reading carefully the last month's number of *Le Vieux Gague*—I find that the toupet is at present worn at Paris and Versailles. Monsieur Thiers has adopted it, on dit out of compliment to Messieurs les Princes de la maison d'Orléans, with whom it is a pious heir-loom, derived from le bon et bien heureux King Louis Philippe de sainte mémoire

'he toupet is especially adapted to adorn the row of genius. It will blend admirably with the aprices of the arts. Painting and sculpture would evel in the treatment of this ornamental detail; nd in the interests of posterity, milord will have o consider the claims, the legitimate claims of he arts upon his person—upon the contour of his gure. However, if milord prefers une mise plate la Tartuffe, ou tombante à la Don Basile ou flot-nte à la Romeo, I can arrange his chevelure qually in these manners. If, indeed, milord would ermit me to make him a little suggestion, I hould venture to say that a mise à la Romeo ould be the most becoming for him. It would rtainly be most en caractère with his carrière istingué. Helas! Quel homme exceptionel que, ilord. How many of our grands farceurs poli-ques of to-day, after having made the round of he circle of fame, like milord, are capable of -commencing life successfully à la Romeo. A Romeo cette rôle si difficile. Sapristi! quel. ourage! quel tour de force."

"Nonsense, Louis. I am long past the pow-ered gallantries of youth. I have aged, or else re and excessive study are insensibly producing he effect of age upon me."

"If milord will permit me to say it, milord uelly calumniates himself. For instance, mi-rd's figure faithfully preserves its form. The

ceinture of milord is deux bonnes pouces less than it was last year. I have noted it here in my album. It is a taille parfaite. The taille de guêpe is all very well in an écolier, but it no longer convient à l'homme illustre. Milord has the torse virile vigoureux bien fait—mais très bien fait."

"Ah, Louis, you are partial—too partial. I feel, indeed, that time is telling on me. I have a presentiment that I cannot last long."

"Comment donc. Vous plaisantez, milord. Les grands hommes vieux sont toujours jeunes."

"Emotions are wearing me out, Louis. I feel that I am too sensitive; I cannot control my feelings. Anyone so much the victim of emotions as I, must wear out."

"Crocodiles attain to a great age et cependant, milord; they are most sensitive.

"But crocodiles cry from nature, not by art; it comes easy to them; and though I possess as much nature in me as any crocodile, still it demands an effort. Hence the strain of the effort, the difficult practice of the art, thereby double exhaustion. I have invariably *tried* to cry, and have indeed succeeded in crying at nearly all great *Trials*."

"Quelle seigneurie pleureuse. Tiens voilà des Messieurs qui arrivent. Ce grand çidevant fameux, Big John, et ce fort respectable Guillaume le Bon. Il faut qui je m'esquive, heureusement la

besogne is all but accomplished However, I will return tantôt pour y'retoucher;" and snatching up the instruments of his art, the valet disappeared through a side door, as Big John and William Goodman entered the chamber.

It was the first visit they had paid Lord Silvertongue since the advancement of his fortunes, and William was surprised at the richness of the apartment, as well as interested by the quaint and original devices displayed in the upholstery, and in the fashion of its furniture. So much did these decorations please his taste, and harmonize with the qualities of his mind, that William secretly resolved to have just such a retreat fitted up for his own enjoyment, as soon as relaxation of business afforded him leisure to indulge in fancies.

The walls of the room shone with a moral splendour. It was illuminated in many colours, and tapestried with exalted sentiments and religious mottoes, borrowed from the headings of copy-books, and other respected sources of authentic morality. These were shaped in every variety of character, and painted in all hues. Sometimes they were pasted under the portraits of distinguished worthies of faultless reputation; sometimes cut in fantastical shapes on gilt cardboard, and suspended from brass nails or gaudy ribbons; or tastefully worked in sealing-wax and shell-work by some of the legions of ladies who,

from time to time, had humbly adored Lord Silvertongue.

In the selection of these moral decorations, My Lord had been careful to provide for the fancies of every changing caprice, of every variety of mood. Evidently he had studied the requirements of his own character in choosing the moral sentences which sanctified his retreat. It was as if portions of the man's self had been cut out and pasted on the walls, like the interior of those Parisian apartments where the sides, the floor, the ceiling are so lined with mirrors that, whatever way the inmate turns, whatever attitude he assumes, the reflection of some portion of his person is presented to view. This room was a chamber mirrored with moral reflectors. While seated in his chair, Lord Silvertongue could sustain the standard of his virtue or excite his impulses, by seeing some portion of his own faultless moral nature reflected in complimentary colours from the walls.

There was prudence, forethought, artifice exemplified, not only in the selection, but even in the arrangement and position of these various quotations. Occasionally, one was placed merely as a foil, to give edge, as it were, to emphasize the meaning of a proximate sentence. Here a "*semper eadem;*" there a "*tempora mutantur.*" Under the same glass-case, a weathercock of gilt sealing-wax beside a sheet anchor in papier-

maché. Yonder a portrait of an Evil Genius, arrayed in the robes of a Lord Justice, and underneath, engraven in flaming vermillion characters, the fierce curse of Shylock, "*I hate him, for he is a—CHRISTIAN.*"

Glancing to the right, you read a doubtful extract from Swift on the "Art of Political Lying:" "*Whether 'tis better to contradict a Lye by Truth, or by another Lye;*" but on turning over the left, you were reassured to discern that "*Honesty was the best policy.*" This was over the left. Beyond by the fire-place, was a large piece painted on the wall itself. This was an allegorical representation of the "Judgment of Solomon," wherein the bony figure of Legal Theology was represented as cutting the souls of two children in twain, to content the conflicting claims of rival relatives. In the background, the Demon of Proselytism stood grinning. Big John admired this piece very much; and standing before it in an attitude, declared it to be a *fiasco*, meaning *a fresco*, whereupon there was a laugh both at his ignorance of Italian and at his evident unacquaintance with the terms of art.

An effigy of the patron saint of the Silvertongues, stood in a shrine in a corner of the room. This was the fine old English Conservative worthy, "St. de Gammong." A lamp burned before the shrine. Lord Silvertongue himself was painted

as a votary at the foot of the image, robed in the motley colours of the saint. These were orange and green. By a coincidence, it happened that these colours were also those of My Lord's own noble family. They might be observed in heraldic blazonry in the reverse corner of the chamber, where the family arms were freshly carven: a tight-rope dancer poised. Motto, "*Balancez Langue d'Argent.*" For Crest—A Phœnix crowned with a wideawake.

On a pier table stood a large smelling-bottle, labelled "Essence of Self." When Lord Silvertongue rose to receive William Goodman and Big John, this essence, which scented his hair, and impregnated his whole person, being disturbed by the movement, suddenly pervaded the room. William knew the perfume well, but Big John was overpowered by its effect, and felt unwell.

Lord Silvertongue advanced to shake hands with each of his friends together; then with one after the other. When they related the immediate and pressing object of their visit, his Lordship started up afresh, and shook hands with them all over again with fervour, with vigour—protesting, in language tremulous with emotion, "that there was nothing, if in his power, which he would not do for them both, for all belonging to them; and that his good friend, Big John, and his benefactor,

William, might command his humble services to the death.

Here he pulled out a cambric pocket-handkerchief, and dropped a tear of gratitude.

"Then out with you at once, and send her about her business," blurts out Big John, in his blunt, plebeian fashion; "apparently no tongue but yours will have any effect."

"But my tongue is rather out of order at this moment. I have just now a very bad sore throat, and you know my chest is far from strong," replied Silken Thomas; "and the doctor has especially cautioned me against speaking much in the open air while the delicacy lasts, as he says it may shorten my days—but that I would not mind. I would not suffer considerations of mere health to weigh a moment when your welfare and interests are at stake. I 'm sure you must both feel that—(pause)—But, I have some difficulty in believing that you are both serious in asking me to do this thing," added his Lordship, making a longer pause; "or else, if you be, that you have carefully reflected on the peculiar circumstances which personally affect me in this matter—on the impropriety, for instance, which might result from my interference."

"How is that?" inquired William.

"I don't understand," observed Big John.

"I mean my own close relationship to that un-

happy, abandoned female creature in the street," answered Thomas Lord Silvertongue. "You must have forgotten that. What influence can I have with her, except through my blood-relationship? and it would, you will agree—it would be dastardly if I were to turn on my own relative merely because she is in poverty. Blood, you will admit, is thicker than water—'tis thicker than wine."

"'Tis even thicker than cod-liver oil," sneers Big John.

"You were not always so sensitive. Your susceptibility upon this point seems to be newly awakened," answered William, tartly. "Long ago, when I put the woolsack between the two stools for you, and crowned you with the coronet, and made you a partner of the firm, your conscience was then little disturbed by those warm claims of blood-relationship. You found a way of setting aside the unpalatable claims of your vagrant kindred, then. But 'tis just as I expected, and had foreseen. You are like all the rest. There is no such thing as gratitude, unless it indeed be, gratitude for favours to come."

"'Tis downright shameful," cried Big John, with his big voice. "I have n't had anything like your share of the plunder out of the concern. I have n't had a penny for your pound out of it; yet I'd scorn to abandon the head of the firm

at such a crisis. I could not bring myself to do such a thing. 'Tis all fine to talk about your blood-relationship, but I consider that your duty, that the first duty of all of us, is to the owner of the Caravan."

"'Shameful!' 'Ingratitude!' These epithets were never before applied to Thomas Lord Silvertongue, even by the malice of his enemies. Never in my hearing, at least," observed his lordship, with a deeply-offended air.

"It is too bad that at this hour of need you positively decline to help us. I did not expect such treatment," said William. "I must repeat that it looks rather like 'ingratitude'—I regret being compelled to employ the term."

"I decline to assist you! I never did, I protest," answered Silken Thomas, warmly.

"Why don't you, then? Why don't you step over the way, and send her off, instead of wasting time, talking here?" said Big John.

"Because it would be a false move. Because I refuse to make fools of you, and a show of myself before all the people, without either necessity or profit," answered Lord Silvertongue, rising. "Do you suppose she would go away so readily for my telling? Do you think it such a simple feat—so easy to accomplish? You tried it at one time yourself, and did not find it so easy, I imagine."

"My voice is out of practice. I have been so long in retirement that she has forgotten all about me this long time," said Big John. "Besides, I am not her blood-relation, and have not your claims upon her."

"You took her part more decidedly than I ever did, though," replied his Lordship, readily. "I did not pursue her with attentions, nor adopt her claims, nor make my own of her case, as you did; nor constitute myself her advocate, as you did; nor puff her up with big talk. Nor either fill her with false notions with the intoxication of native ideas, like Mr. William here, who so readily, and I may add, so grossly, in a manner altogether unbecoming, unwarranted, ventures to brand me with the stigma of ingratitude."

Big John and William Goodman looked puzzled; neither could find a syllable to utter, as Silken Thomas glanced triumphantly from one to the other in expectation of a reply; when opportunely the door burst open, and Little John arrived breathless in the middle of the room.

Lucifer had sent him to announce that the woman was raising the whole street—that she had twice tried to fire the straw underneath the flooring of the Waggon, with her matches and fusees; that the crowd, inflamed by her language, was getting dangerous—stones had been torn up,

and hurled at the Caravan. The faithful Lucifer was quite in terror of his life.

"I don't know what on earth to do," said William Goodman.

"I am at my wits' end quite," said Big John.

"Shall we send for the gentlemen-in-waiting?" asked William; "'tis perhaps the best thing to do."

"Send for the Gentlemen in Black, boobies both!" said Silken Thomas, briskly. "Your stupidity is shameful. Send for the Gentlemen in Black; they'll arrange everything; it is the only thing to be done."

The faces of William and Big John brightened, and Little John, jumping up, screamed out that it was a famous suggestion. He was for running off at the instant to summon Lucifer, and all the other proprietors of the Caravan, to form a deputation to interview the gentlemen alluded to.

But Silken Thomas was quite against it.

"Had we not better put our best leg forward?" said Little John.

"If you do, you'll put your foot in it," replied Lord Silvertongue; "it is necessary to be circumspect—to select with care those who are to be members of the deputation; for the Gentlemen in Black are touchy, suspicious, stand-off, and difficult to manipulate; and have become very exacting and curious about the antecedents and character of the persons with whom they associate.

Lucifer they can't abide, because of his false face, and no wonder," added Lord Silvertongue; "and Little John, because of his antecedents, they naturally abominate; and even Big John here, for being such a strong dissenter, I doubt if they will consent to receive. In a word," his lordship added, "there is no one amongst you fit to approach 'the Gentlemen,' except, perhaps, William Goodman and myself."

"You'll want a third man, though," said Little John, who was dying to be asked to join.

"We shall, and I have him—the very one!" exclaimed Lord Silvertongue, triumphantly "Will-o'-the-Whisp is the man. They have great confidence in him, and he has a solemn, conscientious face. Besides, he is a humourist, and will enjoy the joke, and he understands them best of any of us. He'll do."

So Little John, sorely disappointed, was sent off to find Will-o'-the-Whisp.

"Tell him we shall assemble in the '*Low Castle-yard.*' Let him meet us sharp up to time," called out Lord Silvertongue, as Little John was running off. And at the same moment my lord despatched another messenger, with an invitation to "the Gentlemen" to meet him there as soon as possible.

Now, the Low Castle-yard was a very low haunt, where pickpockets, thieves, perjurers, informers, detectives, crown prosecutors, and all

varieties of scamps and out-at-elbow adventurers, were wont to assemble waiting for hire.

It surprised William Goodman that Lord Silvertongue should think of inviting the gentlemen to assemble in such a slum of evil repute.

"I understood that they particularly disliked the name of that place. The air of it, I know, does not agree with them; and I doubt if they will consent to be seen there at all," he observed aloud.

"Once they learn that Will-o'-the-Whisp and myself are of the party, they will go anywhere, they are so very fond of us; they have such confidence in us," answered Lord Silvertongue. "Especially in him—naturally so; for he has never yet done anything but make use of them for his own objects, any more than myself—ahem. When they learn that he is coming, they will have no sort of suspicion."

"You know them best," answered Goodman; "for my part, they always puzzled me."

"Yes; you never understood them, and, moreover, never will. Therefore, I think you had better allow Will-o'-the-Whisp and myself to manage this our own way, and don't you spoil things by meddling and interfering, otherwise it will result in mischief, and you'll regret it."

To this, Goodman readily enough consented; so presently he and Lord Silvertongue set forth for the Castle-yard, leaving Big John alone to find his way back to the Caravan.

It was melancholy to see the solitary Big Man returning through the streets, with a downcast air. It was not the neglect of former associates, nor the decline of his powers, that was hard to bear, but his conscience was burdened and ill at ease. The vulgar feelings of common humanity were closely interwoven with his nature, and would not depart out of him. He had remorse. The past was a reproach. He dreaded to meet his old friends, the people; to encounter that poor confiding woman whom he had at one time so ostentatiously taken under protection. Ah! the past, the mocking past. Limerick—Dublin! That court suit that fitted so ill; the unbecoming finery of which he had been so vain. The famous "old songs" of other days, that he could not now attune his big voice to sing. No wonder he was ashamed to look the outcast woman in the face.

Lord Silvertongue, however, was not ashamed to meet the glance of any human being—his conscience gave no twinges. At the Castle-yard, Will-o'-the-Whisp was duly found in waiting. Lord Silvertongue shook him by the hand, offered his arm; and, with William Goodman on the other side, my Lord jauntily led the way to meet the Gentlemen in Black, well pleased with himself and all the world, gaily whistling his favourite air, "The Groves of Blarney."

PART III.

How the Obstruction came to be removed.

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HOW THE OBSTRUCTION CAME TO BE REMOVED.

"Motley 's your only wear."

WILL-O'-THE-WHISP was, in the opinion of William Goodman, a man of irreproachable rectitude, of uncompromising principle—a knight, such as *Bayard sans peur;* a phrase that was translated by Oppositionists into *Bavard sans peer—Bavard*, because he was always fetching and carrying stories about, earwigging his friends. From this habit, his sobriquet of "Will-o'-the-Whisper" was first derived. It was afterwards shortened into "Will-o'-the-Whisp." This contraction suited in every way: first, because the light of his intelligence was fitful and uncertain; next, because he would never have ranked as a luminary at all, but for the unwholesome character and diseased political atmosphere of the haunts which he frequented.

He had already acquired considerable reputation as a go-between, and was regarded as quite a confidential person. He was always giving advice on difficult problems of government. William Goodman believed that this advice was of

advantage both to the country and to the Caravan, but other persons were of a different opinion. At all events, Will-o'-the-Whisp was now securely fixed in office as one of the elect; and justly so, for before the event of his final election, he had displayed considerable merit, or considerable ability. When at that time, he went to the country, he explained to his rustic friends and supporters a new form of the old trick called "trick-o'-the-loop." "The Home-Rulers" were not quick enough to understand it then, but they have become more intelligent since. They do now thoroughly, although the more they puzzle, the more puzzled they became over it. Still, they perfectly understand, at present, the trick which he played them.

"Will-o'-the-Whisp," hopes to succeed Phœnix Apollo in office. He hopes that the latter may be presently turned adrift, as he so well deserves. He hopes, also, that the day of judgment may not arrive—that the bottom may not fall out of the Caravan before all this happens.

Although he commenced life as a vagrant politician, he is now established in the safe position of a *man of letters*. He is very attentive and punctual at his "*Post*." Being but a recent partner, he is anxious to show that he has regular business habits; and as he dreams of obtaining a crown and title, perhaps, like Lord Silvertongue,

by-and-by, he is most anxious to please the heads of the firm, and faithfully serve his master, William Goodman.

He is in high favour with the "Gentlemen in Black," who have fast confidence in him. They like him even better than Silken Thomas, who, since his elevation, has rather declined in favour.

However, upon this occasion, the "Gentlemen in Black" received the visit of Will-o'-the-Whisp and his friends with a degree of coolness which reached freezing point. When the object of the deputation was fully explained, many of "the gentlemen" declared that the complaint of the poor woman against Goodman's establishment was founded on justice, that her claim was valid, and that if they were to interfere, it would be to take her part, while others refused point-blank to meddle in the matter.

Then, Will-o'-the-Whisp, who had been the spokesman, coming to a full stop, with a puzzled face, looked at Lord Silvertongue.

But Silken Thomas only turned on his heel, as if to look out of the window, humming an air. As he turned, however, he skilfully dropped a word into Goodman's ear.

William immediately came forward, bowing to the earth, and addressed the "Gentlemen in Black."

"He was but a poor pedlar," he said, "who

had to work for a living, and had come to the town solely to obtain their venerable patronage. If they would but look kindly upon him, step across the street to inspect the stock, they would, he ventured to hope, be interested by the inspection. For not only were his goods the best value, but also the cheapest hitherto exhibited by any house in the trade; and, moreover, he had been careful to provide a particular package of trinkets to supply the special needs and comforts of "the gentlemen" themselves, and these he pledged his honour should be offered at the invoice price, without a penny profit to himself."

At this one or two of "the gentlemen" looked at him with kindly eyes.

"In truth, my motive is that you might see the good things which I have in stock," added William, boldly. "It is on that account chiefly that I ask you to preserve me from the scandalous interference of that reckless and unfortunate female. The parcel intended for you has been unfortunately packed in the bottom of the hamper, so that the articles which are uppermost must first be sold off before we can reach down to where your things are lying snug at the bottom. You will perceive that, unless this woman be controlled, the auction cannot proceed, and I shall be unable to reach those valuable commodities which I believe you would be well pleased to obtain."

At this a few of "the gentlemen" answered civilly, that they were not unwilling to trade with William and his firm—not in principle—as they had ever regarded him personally as a respectable tradesman, although the company he frequented was not always the best. Then it was asked directly, what kind of goods he had to offer.

William replied evasively, that the varieties of these goods were manifold, but that they all were cheap.

This, "the gentlemen" said, would not do at all; he should be more explicit. An exact and specific list of the wares should be furnished, should be written out in a legible hand, before they could entertain, or even take the subject into consideration.

To this William was about to reply, when several "Gentlemen" put forth their hands and stopped him. They would have nothing more from him, they said; they could not place perfect reliance on his word; but if his two partners would speak privately upon the subject, they were prepared to listen. Whereupon William, nothing loth, withdrew out of hearing into a distant window, and Will-o'-the-Whisp and Lord Silvertongue advanced to the centre of the group.

Then "the Gentlemen" gathered round, asking what it was that Goodman had stored in the bottom of the basket, adjuring them both, in a solemn manner, to tell the entire and perfect truth.

"I never told even a white lie in all my life, that I can remember—that is"—said Will-o'-the-Whisp.

"Persons of my order don't swear, but I give you my word of honour," said his lordship, Silvertongue, with an offended air.

"So!" said "the gentlemen." "Go on—we'll believe you. You were both at the packing of the hamper; tell us what he put into it. Tell us everything without reserve."

"The first thing which I saw put into the basket," said Will-o'-the-Whisp, endeavouring to keep a serious countenance—"the first thing which I saw put into the basket was a new game, an educational puzzle, which will be found of much advantage to the children under your care. A very ingenious and creditable, although an intricate piece of workmanship. Besides, there was a supply of primers, books, maps, and things connected with the game."

"Anything else?"

"Also, a model of a college—don't be alarmed, not a 'model school,' nothing like it, quite a different sort of thing—a model of a college of a new construction, the doors and windows of which open and shut of themselves."

"But shall we be able to open and shut them from the inside?"

"Certainly. The key of the hall-door will be

given up to you, so that you may fast lock all the doors, and bolt down all the windows, and keep out any poisonous atmosphere or influence you don't like, or any body you don't like."

At this "the Gentlemen" looked quite pleased. One of them, in a timid voice, enquired if the college was empty?

"Quite!" was the answer. "Quite empty; so that you will be free to furnish it according to your fancy."

"But is there nothing whatever in it?" persisted "the Gentleman." "Does it not contain any precious and necessary thing?"

Silken Thomas answered—"The most precious and necessary intellectual thing which a college can contain is——

"I did not say intellectual," replied the "Gentleman," interrupting. "I did not refer to that; I meant something more substantial."

"But surely the most substantial thing which a college can contain is knowledge," reiterated Silken Thomas.

"Perhaps you will understand my meaning better," continued the querist, addressing Will-o'-the-Whisp, point blank. "Did you see anything more substantial even than knowledge placed inside the college?"

"I did. I did see something else placed safe inside the college," answered Will-o'-the-Whisp,

emphatically. "You need not refer to it. I understand your meaning—quiet your anxiety. *It* is there."

"That will do," answered one of "the Gentlemen," rubbing his hands.

"And in addition to that, I saw a Royal Charter attached to the college," continued Will-o'the-Whisp.

"Is not that a ship? A bad omen. Is not 'Royal Charter' the name of a ship which went down with everybody?" nervously asked another of "the Gentlemen," addressing his brethren.

"But this Royal Charter is certain not to *go down* with anybody—there is the difference," whispered Will-o'-the-Whisp into the ear of Silken Thomas.

"What is it you say?" asked one of the "Gentlemen," who was quick of hearing.

"I was observing that this Royal Charter, unlike its foundered namesake, will swim to the end of the voyage, and also float the whole system with which it is associated," answered Will-o'-the-Whisp, hardily. "I am satisfied about that. Let cavillers talk, I have as little doubt about the inherent buoyancy of the whole project, or speculation, with which this Charter is associated, as I have of—of—the honesty of William Goodman. As little doubt of either——"

"As I have myself, perhaps," said Lord Silvertongue.

"Exactly so," said the other, at fault for a word. "As Lord Silvertongue has himself——"

This was the finishing stroke. At this, the body of gentlemen went over to where William Goodman was standing alone.

They expressed themselves now satisfied about the goods he had to sell, and declared that they were ready to go over to his Waggon as customers; also, to arrange that there should be no further obstruction from the woman.

"And for my part," added Goodman, "I will endeavour to sell off all the top things quickly, so as to get to the bottom of the basket before evening, and you will then obtain those articles which you want so badly—which you ought to have had long ago, and which can only be obtained genuine at my counter. The Educational Puzzle, College, and Royal Charter."

"*Et caetera*," added one of "the Gentlemen." "Don't forget."

"*Et caetera* of course," added William, colouring.

"The Gentlemen" promptly fulfilled their promise. In a short time, almost before William could reach the Caravan, they were in the middle of the disturbed street, quelling the riot, remonstrating with the mob, whom the woman's

eloquence had now excited to fury, causing the ringleaders to fall into the background, and striking the poised missile from many a willing hand. At their approach the most active partizans of the woman dispersed. She sat upon a door-step, and began to cry bitterly when the peace-makers drew near. Well she appreciated their influence and power. Her memory was keen enough. "The Gentlemen" had performed a similar considerate office before for some of Goodman's predecessors in the Caravan business; and as she had lived to regret their action then, so had they lived to repent it likewise.

But people are always slow to learn from the experience of others—from the teaching of political events: otherwise how could history repeat itself as it does.

Yet "the Gentlemen" did not address her in harsh or unkindly terms. Quite otherwise. They did not deny the existence of her grievous wrongs, the justice of her complaint. They did not attempt to condemn her efforts to obtain redress and deliverance. They had a true compassion for her condition; but (this was their only argument) the time was at the moment inopportune, they said. It would give scandal to the neighbourhood if she continued to agitate at present, and they should prevent any sort of scandal. There was a time for fiddling, a time for fighting,

a time for dancing, a time for being at rest, and now it was time for her to be quiet. There had been rioting enough; and now, if she were not disposed to attend to remonstrance, and observe order, they must exercise their authority—their legitimate authority.

That was the whole of it. However pressing her case, they would not suffer it to interfere with the prosecution of their own affairs, which were no less important than hers. They had come to this auction determined to do business, to purchase certain precious articles at William's counter. They believed him to be an honest tradesman, and knew that he had on sale the very peculiar things which they so particularly wanted. Therefore the auction must be suffered to proceed; they desired—they insisted that it should; and concluded by saying, that if she attempted to raise her voice again, they would order her off out of the street altogether.

At this the creature only sobbed. It was hard, cruel, unfair treatment, she moaned. But it did not cross her mind to disobey or dispute the mandate of "the Gentlemen;" for she had not only a great reverence and respect for them, but much sincere affection beside. So she huddled into the door-way, drawing her ragged draperies about, the starved and peevish child, moaning the while.

Alongside on the door-flag stood the basket of matches: it was all she had in the world to live by—her whole stock in trade.

Some of the "Gentlemen in Black," noticing the basket of matches, whispered among themselves.

It was plainly dangerous, they said, to allow a person of her excitable temperament to be carrying such combustible things about the open streets, especially in the neighbourhood of Goodman's Caravan, filled as that was with light straw, waste paper, and all sorts of inflammable materials. A catastrophe might occur at any moment; and if the Waggon were by chance to catch fire, what a calamity to the nation at large—to every one. As a measure of precaution, therefore, one of "the Gentlemen" went to a pump which was close by, and fetching a vessel of water, poured it deliberately into the woman's basket, wetting all the lucifers, fusees, and crackers, so that they could never catch fire, or do any harm again.

At this the outraged woman started erect. "Take care!" she cried; "you did this before—you did the same thing in '98. At that time it was not some miserable boxes of matches which I had for sale, but real cartridges, powder and ball, and bomb-shells. Yet you damped them on me—you destroyed them. You thought you were acting wisely then, as you probably think at pre-

sent. Take care! you may find out the mistake when it is too late. You may repent when the opportunity is past. Lucifer matches are things which it may come to your own turn to want, and before long."

But Lucifer, who had been all this time peeping through the blind from one of the back windows of the Waggon, gave a great laugh when he saw the cold water poured on the basket of lucifer matches. "Although matches are things for which I have personally a fondness, still I am well pleased at the destruction of this basketful," he cried, running off to tell William Goodman of the turn affairs had taken.

William was lying in a state of coma. The noises in the street, the demeanour of the people, and the fatigues of the morning, had quite unnerved and upset him. But he jumped up bright and refreshed when Lucifer arrived with this welcome item of news.

Silken Thomas, refreshing himself with a sherry-cobbler on the sofa, was suddenly enveloped in the eager embrace of the head of the firm, who began to utter compliments on his cleverness and tact, declaring that he had saved the Caravan—that he was an example for them all to follow, and a credit to his country.

"I knew the 'Gentlemen in Black' could do it if they would; they have performed the same

thing so often, they know how to go about it," said Lord Silvertongue, modestly blushing at the compliments. "But what are we do about those goods 'the gentlemen' want," he added, looking straight into William's face—"the Puzzle, the Charter, and those other little things? We have pledged our word, or our honour, or something of the sort; have n't we?"

"But these wares are such a long way down in the bottom of the basket, and are very difficult to get at. And there are so many other articles which will fetch more money for the concern, which must be sold off first," said William Goodman, drooping his eyelids; "besides, they have spoiled the woman's matches and fusees, and she cannot do us any more harm now."

"Of course. Naturally, one can understand that, and you are certainly the best judge," answered Lord Silvertongue, hastily. "It would be better, however, if you kept those details of business from my knowledge altogether. I have a character to lose; and it would look more creditable, more respectable and be more useful for all of us—Perhaps it would be wiser for me not to be seen behind the counter to-day; so I will just step back across the street again, if you please, and finish having my hair curled," added Silken Thomas, going off quickly with his silver tongue in his cheek.

Then William ordered the kettle-drums and whistles to strike up afresh, to attract the crowd, which had somewhat thinned because of the delay and interruptions; and in a while, when a respectable number had re-assembled, he took his hammer out of his pocket, mounted the platform, and began to puff and praise his wares, in his usual clear and confident tone. People returned to buy, a little slowly at first, but gradually with more spirit; for business confidence was returning, and the goods looked cheap.

All traces of the recent confusion presently disappeared under the action of the healthy commercial spirit which begun to develop. The sales went on briskly, but the eyes of "the Gentlemen" were fixed on the auctioneer.

They stood apart in a group by themselves, not heeding that neither Goodman nor the public were pleased by their exclusive and resolute demeanour. A large hamper had been placed upon the platform, and William began to draw forth the different objects out of it, to sell them off with such rapidity that it must soon be emptied. "The Gentlemen" calculated that it should, and evidently it was their intention to remain until the bottom was reached. Not a movement of the salesman escaped their attention.

William began to recognize the growing difficulties of his position. The problem was to keep

"the Gentlemen" in a passive state until it was too late to continue business; and this without at the same time losing his essential popularity with his customers and the public.

This was not easy.

At length, annoyed by the sort of magnetic influence which this constant watchfulness was beginning to exercise on his mind—anxious to divert their attention if but for a moment—Goodman drew out a crackling parchment of great length, garnished with official seals and tapes, and held it up, inviting with his eye the attention of the group.

Somebody murmured the word "Royal Charter." The eyes of "the Gentlemen" began to sparkle.

"Is it really the thing you know at last?" asked some one, in an audible whisper.

William nodded, but immediately corrected himself.

"Not exactly, I believe," he observed aloud, holding the document close up to his eyes, as if not quite sure of its character. "Not exactly that, but something marvellously like it—something that you will be almost as well pleased to obtain, and which you may lock up in your archives, and leave as a memento to your children."

"The title of it. Name it at once," exclaimed a voice.

"You have hit it off exactly," replied William. "*Title* is the title of it. The Titles Act."

"What on earth is the use of that?" inquired one of "the Gentlemen," in a tone of disgust. "That document is quite out of date, now. Nobody cares whether you sell or keep it. What do you expect us to do with it?"

"As one of the curiosities of literature, I thought you might wish to become possessors of it," answered William, blandly.

"I object to the term," exclaimed the Jew Trovato. "It is a libel. That 'Curiosity of Literature,' gentlemen, is not the work of any member of my family, or of any of my friends"—

"We are aware of that."

"You may guess the author by the handiwork. It is the sole achievement of a very small person with a large mind, full of liberal ideas—very! A literary man, and very learned, too," sneered the Jew.

Little John slipped under the platform out of sight.

"The Gentlemen" regarded the offer of the Titles Act in the light of an insult. Some of the body addressed William in loud tones of remonstrance.

But he did not heed. It was plain that the people were becoming impatient at the continued presence of "the Gentlemen" there; so, taking

advantage of the hostile spirit of the populace, our Cheap John assumed a defiant and offensive air towards them. The end was very near, now, and it was the only policy open for him to adopt.

"They are an ungrateful set. Ungrateful!" he repeated, addressing the crowd, and solemnly waving his hand in the direction of the group. "After all that I have done for them, and all that I intended to do still, to manifest such a temper."

Then folding up the Titles Act into a bundle, he cast it contemptuously into the crowd, saying, rudely—

"You may take or leave it as you please. I have my business to attend to, and cannot afford to waste more time, humouring your moods and caprices."

Having uttered these caustic words, William turned his back on the astonished "Gentlemen," and with a rapid, business-like air, began to pull things out of the basket to offer them for sale, and to knock them down with the speed of lightning. The people seeing that business was intended, began to bid in earnest, so the basket was visibly becoming empty.

However, "the Gentlemen in Black" did not take prompt offence, as William intended they should, nor either depart in anger, as he had hoped that they might.

After the first moment of surprise, they endured

the insult in silence. They did not break the peace—they simply held their own, but they also held their ground.

This was a disappointment to the Cheap John, who desired only to get rid of them, in order to close sales, and finish the prosperous business of the day. He was indifferent to the account which "the Gentlemen" might demand of him afterwards, so that he could escape at the moment from the annoyance of their surveillance. But it was in vain that he desired it. They would not go. It became plain that they had no intention whatever of stirring. Their eyes were fixed steadily as ever upon the basket. They measured the degree of its emptiness by the excessive stooping which William had to execute in order to reach to each successive object. In a while, it was evident that if the hamper yet contained anything at all, it could only be the College, the Charter, and the other things, which had been so patiently waited for. The bottom must be reached at last, and accordingly the general excitement gathered to a point. A crisis was imminent. The eyes of "the Gentlemen" were inexorably expectant.

What was honest William to do to save his honour and reputation?—what possible device adopt?

A ray of inspiration visited him.

All at once he uttered a cry—a piercing scream, that burst through the heart of the crowd, causing everyone to start into attention. Then he lifted up the now light and empty basket by both handles, and holding it high aloft, over the heads of the people, let every one see that the bottom had been cut out of it.

"Some villain—a scoundrel has done this!" William exclaimed, at the top of his voice. "The bottom of my basket has been removed. See! the twigs have been cut away by the knife of some assassin—some moral assassin. The goods and pretty things, which I had keeping for those "Gentlemen" some outcast, irreverent reprobate has stolen—made away with. It's enough to make the blood boil; enough to make one go into a monastery, and retire from business altogether—such depravity in our poor human nature," he added, dropping his face in his hands, pretending to be overwhelmed with emotion.

"The Gentlemen," taken by surprise, stood gaping helplessly into each other's faces.

"It is a shame!" exclaimed William, recovering slowly from the first violence of his feelings, and searching for his pocket-handkerchief. "It is a shame!" he added, blowing his nose very hard.

"It is very clever indeed—very," cried out the Jew, on the crosstree of the lamp-post.

"The Gentlemen" looked up at the sound. The Jew was grinning at them from his perch.

"Sold again!" he said, clicking his tongue.

"Such a fraud on a respectable tradesman," William continued, whimpering. "I shall certainly hand the matter over to the authorities. I shall place it in the hands of the police, and publish it in the daily papers."

"Oh, dolts! How long will you continue to be gulled in this open fashion? Can you not recognise another form of the old basket trick, which he originally acquired from your smooth friend, Silken Thomas," said the Jew, sliding down the lamp-post, and landing right in the middle of the group. "Can you not see that he never had any bottom to the basket at all."

At this, the "Gentlemen in Black" looked as black as thunder.

"Don't you perceive that, having now sold off his wares—having done his business, and taken a turn out of you," added the Jew, "that he snaps his fingers, and laughs at your discomfiture—laughs at the solemn promises which you were so imbecile as to believe in. Pay attention, you shall judge."

It was true enough, even though the Jew had said it.

For no sooner had William recovered from the apparent shock of the basket robbery, than he

summoned the company together, and under direction of Lucifer, who was an excellent mechanic, they all set to work with hammers and pinchers to pull the platform rapidly asunder, and bundle it pell-mell into the Waggon. The stones were struck from under the wheels; and Little John, the Phœnix, the Great Dispencer, and all the rest, began to get into their top-coats and wrappers in a precious hurry, laughing and chuckling amongst themselves at the way the respectable "Black Gentry" had been deceived. Some said that William had never acted better in all his life; that the basket trick was superb; that he was one of the smartest of men, equal to Barnum—to anybody on the other side of the Atlantic, and that after George Francis Train, he deserved to be the next President of America.

They all mounted on the Waggon, and got under weigh with surprising speed. Lucifer took charge of the reins, and began to thwack the ragged back of the hungry donkey with his cudgel. And William Goodman, mounting on the dickey, took out his own trumpet, and began to blow it triumphantly, as the machine moved slowly up the street, escorted by the crowd which followed in its wake.

The mob was now hearty and good-humoured. A few voices called after the discomfited "Gen-

tlemen," in mocking tones. There were some parting notes of triumph, catcalls and whistling, in the distance; and the street was deserted by all but "the Gentlemen," the woman, and the Jew, Ben Trovato. "The Gentlemen," still stupified, stood apart.

"You have no right to be astonished at this occurrence," exclaimed the Jew; "not the least. Notwithstanding your reputation for insight, you frequently fail, I conceive, in astuteness; and in this case have certainly exhibited, not the proverbial wisdom of the serpent, but rather the affected simplicity of the dove. You, my friend," he added, addressing the woman, "they knew you best, indeed, who first selected for you that charming national colour of which you are so vain."

The woman remained moaning on the doorstep; "the Gentlemen" looked gloomily indifferent, as if they did not hear.

"You look at each other with wondering eyes. How often, alas! must you both be deceived again before experience shall teach either of you to open those eyes," the Jew continued. "The world may be wicked, but it would not be so deceitful only for the number of fools who are walking abroad. It is the abundance of fools that breeds so many rogues. If people will go

on walking out with their eyes closed, 'tis next to impossible for other people to avoid setting gins for them to walk into—human nature can't resist 'doing it.'"

"To think that he of all men—that William Goodman should have been guilty of such a trick," murmured one of "the Gentlemen."

"Which—the Basket Trick? It was uncommonly well done; capital. The most creditable performance of the present management which I have witnessed," exclaimed the Jew, with enthusiasm. "I scarcely thought it in Goodman, to go through it so well."

"To think there should be a false bottom to the basket!"

"False bottom! Bless you, that basket is one of the properties of the Caravan—a regular fixture of the office, like the hat-rack and the coal-scuttle," continued the Jew. "To each successive tenant, that basket is handed over as regularly as the key of the door. We never could carry on the trade, and keep down Popery and troublesome claimants who, like that woman, attack the managers of the Caravan, but for the false bottom. I thought you knew that—I thought you found it out by your own wits long ago. That basket is regarded as one of the bulwarks of the Church by all the old Protestant ladies. It

is called the "No Popery;" and is prayed for, along with the memory of King William, regularly at Exeter Hall. Half the good women of London believe that but for the false bottom, wooden shoes would be down upon us in a twinkling. When in business I thought to try it also, but deemed the trick worn out. I imagined you must discover it at once. Mistake!—I did not suppose you so innocent."

"You could never have deceived us. Your name is too notorious for that," answered one of "the Gentlemen," now addressing the Jew directly. "I don't wish to be uncivil, but you must be aware that your character is already too —too famous—"

"Out with it—too infamous you would say," joined in the Jew, laughing.

"We don't say any such thing—we don't wish to be unmannerly; but you will understand that between us there never can be sympathy, never even anything but hostility."

"Yet there *was* something else between us not so long ago, you may remember."

"If there was we are sorry for it, and there never will be again, you may rely," answered "the Gentleman." "Our ways are necessarily divergent; you must recognise that yourself. It must be so, as we are essentially Christians,

while, unhappily, you are—but I dislike being too plain spoken."

"While I am, probably, a 'heathen Chinee;' pray proceed."

"While you are a pagan—I grieve to apply the term. A pagan—that is, our declared antagonist."

"Even if it were so, better an open enemy than a false friend—than a false friend like the respectable, peddling personage who has just taken you in so serenely, I imagine," observed the Jew. "But if you dislike me, does it follow that I must hate you back in turn? It is not so, believe me; it cannot be. We pagans have n't it in us to hate each other, like you Christians."

"We Christians are all brothers," replied several of "the Gentlemen," in one voice.

"Cain and Abel were brothers, too," rejoined Trovato.

"Your principles must for ever keep us apart. There are some things which we never could get over"—

"Things, perhaps—not principles! I never encountered a principle yet that an intelligent man could not get over. Principle is the '*Pons Assinorum*'—a problem only to dunderheads—none but certain quadrupeds ever stop at the other side of that bridge."

"Shocking!—but not unnatural: the fruits of paganism."

"Modern pagans need not profess paganism—recognise that essential peculiarity," said Trovato, cheerfully. "Why not shake hands? If we are enormously apart, yet extremes meet. Let extremists embrace. I am without prejudice of any sort. I am as unfettered by prejudice as—as by principle, you would probably say. Ha!"

"When a person has no creed whatever, believes in nothing; moreover, openly practises what he believes"—

"But I have several creeds, and believe in every one of them."

"For instance—instruct us."

"I believe, first, in—in the Asian mystery, for example."

"Vague."

"Next, in British mystification. I believe in that thoroughly, and it is positive enough; plenty of salvation in it, too."

"You associate with Philistines; you worship with them openly; you consort with Capulets, and we are Montagues, all. Thereby, we cannot mingle," rejoined "the Gentlemen," severely.

"But I am ready to eat both Philistines and Capulets, the day after to-morrow, if only somebody will see to the cooking. Being, as you say, below principle, and, as I aver, above pre-

judice, it necessarily follows that I am of all things a"—

"Comedian," suggested one of "the Gentlemen in Black," smiling.

"And Conservative, too. Don't let us forget—don't on any account forget—that I belong to a party."

"Swift said, 'Party was the madness of the Many for the gain of the Few.'"

"And I quite agree with the admirable Dean," answered the Jew, briskly. "Do let us shake hands. We should like each other better, if only better acquainted. If our interests are not apparently the same, we are nevertheless united by the secret bonds of mutual instincts. Perhaps we have different methods of obeying these instincts, but we do obey them. Besides, we have much in common that we cannot disguise. We reverence the antique; we venerate tradition; we respect birth and culture, and abominate the herd—proofs of our fine-bred Eastern origin. We have a mutual contempt for that vile product of Western vulgarity, personal independence. We spring from the same root as the superb Latin races; and despise alike the mean industries and bourgeois affluence of these boors of the West. We have each a deep respect for the foibles of the other. We are sympathetic. In different ways we are each, by conviction, reli-

gious.—Do not smile.—You, practically, solidly; sentimentally, I. Wherein is the essential difference? Sentiment is the exaltation of the soul, the fermentation of its impulses, generated by the fervour of fancy, by imaginative affection. Combined, these forces accomplish the transfiguration of the spiritual being. Then only does the immortal emit its perfect fragrance. Practical religion, after that, becomes an impediment, an obstructive superfluity. Arrived at this stage of perfection, the spiritual essence is beyond reach of contamination by earth. It is not then within the scope of grosser influences to soil the ethereal, impalpable purity of the sentimental conscience—— But I am prepared to be depreciated—I was ever incompris," continued Trovato, observing smiles on the surrounding faces; "when in business, if I had been less sentimental and more practical, I should have been less moral but better understood, and better liked by you also. I was too straightforward, too truthful. Alas!"

"The Gentlemen" laughed out.

"It is a fact. I failed through excessive candour. I exposed my hand at once, instead of shamming it on audaciously to the end, like Goodman. Everybody might have seen that I cared for nothing from the beginning—for nothing but holding on as tenant and mana-

ger of the Caravan. No disguise was put on my motives."

"But that was neither moral or conscientious; that was not a proper spirit with which to embark in business—to engage or conduct so important a concern—and would be of itself sufficient to keep us from having anything to do with you."

"But it had n't that effect, you may remember," answered Ben Trovato, slyly.

"Let by-gones be."

"Agreed, let by-gones die; nevertheless, could I have had my way then, you should have had everything you desired. What did I care that you were chartered, endowed, pensioned. I would willingly have brought everything you wanted into the Waggon, and the Williamites should have agreed to it, only the donkey would n't. There was the rub. The donkey got a sudden return of his old spirit, kicked up his heels, and refused to tug. It was quite an unexpected accident. Finding no other way of dealing with him, we had to throw your little things overboard to lighten the load. If I could have managed the donkey, you might have managed me with ease. If the brute had only been tractable, I would have set up signboard with Principle, Honour, and Honesty—all those things painted on it that William and the rest of the celestial lot are eternally making such a capital out of. It is easy to be

respectable when a man's position in the world is safe. Becky Sharp would have turned virtuous on £5000 a-year. It would have been easy for me to hoist the same colours as the 'divine William's;' and if ever the chance comes again, see if I don't—see if I don't tar myself with the same brush."

"I ever held that you were both tarred with the same brush—I said so long ago; only these 'Gentlemen' would not believe me," moaned the woman.

The Jew turned, with an expression of whimsical pity; then, addressing "the Gentlemen," said—

"To think you should have damped off her lucifers, and squibs, and things. How short-sighted! Where are your memories? Remember '98! You treated her in the same way then. You made the like mistake when another famous William was at the head of the Caravan, and you were sorry enough for it afterwards. He, the Pecksniff of the hour, as usual explained that it was your duty to do it. I dare say you thought so then, as perhaps you do at present. He promised to reward you with emancipation, and the devil knows what. Well! you got emancipation, and the devil knows what—didn't you?"

"Yes," rejoined the woman. "My family was made free to emigrate or to starve at home, as

they pleased. Yet it was considered a boon at the time. These 'Gentlemen' said so at all events, and I believed them."

"And you did right. You do right to work in union together—therein lies your strength; when divided, 'tis all over with both of you. Depend, if ever I obtain control of the Waggon again, I shall make it my business to cultivate your friendship as customers; and if I can't do that successfully, I shall endeavour to excite your mutual jealousies—to sunder, to destroy you."

"So far honest, at all events," said a voice.

"You flatter; I am not honest—I don't profess to be—but I try to be wise, and such a course would be my interest to pursue. Anyway, I think you will find it as profitable in the end to traffic even with my dishonesty as with your blessed William's virtue. Will neither of you ever become sharp enough to see that? Just attend to me for a moment. Give me but leisure to explain, and I will show how manifestly impossible it is for either of you to obtain any terms from that very exalted personage. But first, let us shake hands."

"The Gentlemen" shook their heads.

"Will you shake hands then, my friend?" he said, turning to the woman. "Here, I put my dignity aside, and make the first advance. Here is my hand."

"Your hand—yours! You will be offering it

to Maryanne perhaps to-morrow," she answered, scornfully.

"As you please. I have done my best to win your confidence, but I see it is no use," said the Jew, resignedly, buttoning up his coat, moving away abruptly. "I was not endowed by nature with an earnest countenance, and you, who judge by appearances, will not fraternize. As I'm not appreciated, I must try to do without you both. Good morning."

When Trovato reached the corner of the street he quickened his pace to a run, and was out of sight in a moment.

"He is a bad one, but there is not much choice between him and the other," said one of "the Gentlemen," the same who had poured the water on the woman's lucifers.

"I regret what I did, my dear," he said, turning sadly towards her; "I feel that it was a mistake, and I am sorry for it. These lucifer matches are useful in their way, if only to strike terror into the hearts of lying pedlars and itinerant cheats. I am sorry for what has occurred. It was very indiscreet of me," he added, as tears came into his eyes—"very indiscreet!" He sought for his handkerchief. It was gone.

Upon this discovery the other "Gentlemen" searched their clothes, only to find that every pocket had been picked.

The woman glanced at her basket of small wares; it was empty also.

The clever Jew had taken the opportunity of picking all their pockets, and escaped with the property.

"Yet he seemed disposed to amend. I was quite thrown off my guard by his language, by his appearance of penitence," said one.

"A thief, too!"

"Ay! an impenitent thief, like his obdurate ancestor—kind for him," continued the first "Gentleman." "Everyone connected with that Caravan is indeed tarred with the same brush—rogues all—false to a man. This ought to be a final lesson to each of us," he added, glancing at the woman.

"Is there no law?" she inquired.

"Not for robbing people like us. See! not a policeman in any direction!"

Presently "the Gentlemen" and the woman, after shaking hands, parted. Her way now lay in an opposite direction from theirs. As she passed through the streets crying—for with her matches and fusees she had lost all her property, her only way of eking out a livelihood—as she hurried over a crossing with the starving child in her arms, a magnificent carriage, with powdered footmen, and a coronet on the panels, nearly drove over her. The gentleman inside reproved

the impetuosity of his coachman, observing that the law was against running down poor people in the street; it was not the legal way of running them down. As he turned, the woman recognised Lord Silvertongue. He was going to Court in full dress, with his hair curled.

The recognition was mutual. Lord Silvertongue felt for a coin; but those provoking dress-breeches have no pockets; so instead, he shook hands with the woman through the carriage window, and with his kid glove blessed the child.

"The creature is crying with hunger; he is starving," said the sorrowful mother.

"Not the least matter; it will do him good—make him hardy," answered my lord; "fasting is very wholesome. Bring him up a good man—good and loyal. Keep him away from lucifer matches, dangerous fire works, disreputable foreign companions, Yankees and the like, and bye-and-by, may be I'll do for him. Who knows, if you rear him up to be a barrister he may rise to be a chairman; and if a shopkeeper, perhaps—perhaps—I will yet make a justice of the peace of him," added my Lord, pulling up the window.

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